

ANIMALS & MEN

THE JOURNAL OF THE CENTRE FOR FORTEAN ZOOLOGY



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Col. John Blashford-Snell Interview; Big Cats in the Isle of Sheppey;
Letter from America; The Dorset Dragon Skull

ISSUE 26

£2.50/ \$US3.50

Animals & Men #26

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Animals & Men

CFZ, 15 Holne Court, Exwick, Exeter,
Devon, EX4 2NA,

England

01392 424811

<http://www.eclipse.co.uk/cfz>

email address: cfz@eclipse.co.uk

SUBSCRIPTIONS

For a 4-issue (one year) subscription:

£10 UK £11 EC

£16 US / Canada / Oz / NZ (airmail)

£18 Rest of World.

METHODS OF PAYMENT

Subscription rates INCLUDE postage. On other orders, postage and packing is extra:

please add 25p (£0.30 outside UK) per magazine and 75p (£0.90 outside UK) per book. Payment can be made in UK cash, IMO (international money order), Eurocheque, or a cheque drawn on a UK bank.

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EDITORIAL

THE GREAT DAYS OF ZOOLOGY ARE NOT DONE

representatives per state and hope that within a time frame of about five years we shall have reached our objective.

The Hong Kong project is finally underway and we are hoping to be able to make our first expedition there (my first visit home for over twenty years) later in the year.

Dear Friends,

Welcome to another issue of *Animals & Men*.

This, as a quick glance at the obituary pages will show, has not been the easiest of issues to put together. Writing this, I feel a great affinity with HM The Queen. In the same way that her Golden Jubilee year has been marred by the death of her sister and her mother, our tenth anniversary has been perforce affected by the death of my mother, the death of our next door neighbour and close friend, and both Richard's father and indeed me suffering serious health problems.

It has been a difficult few months and I would like to thank everyone who wrote to me personally with messages of condolence during the period of my mother's last illness. To all of you go a heartfelt thank you from me and my family.

However, as Dickens wrote: "*It was the best of times, it was the worst of times*". Despite our personal problems, the Centre for Fortean Zoology itself has never been in a more healthy state. We have several expeditions in the pipeline, we are presently in the process of applying for charitable status so that we can then be eligible for money from, amongst others, the EC and the Lottery Fund, and we are pleased and proud to announce that Colonel John Blashford-Snell has agreed to become our honorary Life President.

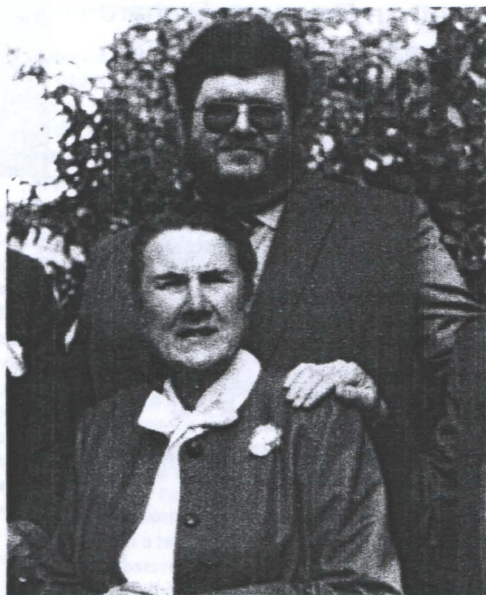
We also now have a full time American Office staffed by our old mucker Nick Redfern. Despite the fact that he knows next to nothing about zoology he has bravely agreed to run our US HQ and we are hoping that this means that not only will we have cheap and efficient distribution for *Animals & Men* in the USA but that we shall be able to institute as efficient a network of regional representatives across the country as we have in the UK. We are looking for at least two

Despite our personal problems, this is an exciting time for the CFZ and I look forward to our second decade with nothing but optimism.

Slainté Mhor

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Downes'.

Jonathan Downes
(Director, Centre for Fortean Zoology)



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Edited and compiled by
Jonathan Downes, Richard
Freeman and Helios Seven



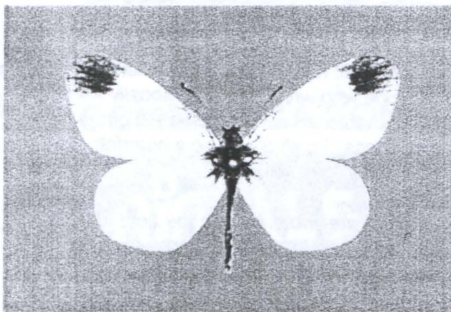
SHADES OF JOHN HURT

A revolting though fascinating story appeared in *Pravda* on 27th July 2001. They allege that a new type of human ectoparasite has been discovered in the Russian city of Ulyanovsk. In the delightfully worded

original news story which caused some little hilarity amongst the Newsfile team "a woman with a big knob on her leg came to consult a doctor." On examination "the big knob" turned out to contain "a long worm about 8 centimetres". The worm was studied by Ulyanovsk epidemiologists, and then sent to the Moscow research institute of parasitology.

WE THOUGHT IT WAS A TAPIR SO WE DID

On the 4th October 2001 Ananova reported that a new species of butterfly with big genitalia has been discovered in Ireland. This is the first time in 112 years a new species has been found in the United Kingdom. The butterfly, named *Leptidea reali*, is almost identical to the endangered wood white except for its genitalia. Scientists from the Ulster Museum and Butterfly Conservation identified the new species.



Martin Warren, of Butterfly Conservation, told *The Times*: "This is an exciting and important discovery." The last species to be discovered in the UK was the Essex skipper in 1889 and the last to be found in the Republic of Ireland, where the *reali* also lives, was the pearl-bordered fritillary in 1922. However, although the Ananova story implied that this was a completely new species, upon investigation it appears that *Leptidea reali* is a northern European species discovered in 1989, and previously thought to be synonymous with the Wood White. The only endemic butterfly species in the British Isles as far as we are aware is the Scotch Argus and the discovery of a second species of endemic would be great news indeed. The fact that the editorial team have managed to survive this entire news item without a 'big genitalia' joke, is, we feel, something on which we should be congratulated.

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WHAT HAS THIS TAUGHT-US?

On Saturday March 2, 2002, *Reuters* announced that the semi legendary giant but extremely shy soft-shelled turtles inhabiting central Hanoi's picturesque Hoan Kiem Lake has shown its nose, an event so rare that locals associate it with a major happening.

The turtle's head bobbed up intermittently out of the water over a period of about 15 minutes shortly after 1:30 p.m. on the previous Saturday, watched by a few dozen excited bystanders, witnesses said. *"People believe a turtle in the lake will only show its nose if there is a big event - maybe it was Jiang Zemin's visit,"* said 33-year-old Luu Thi Thuy.

Jiang Zemin, president of Vietnam's communist ally and traditional rival China, left Vietnam on Friday after a three-day confidence-building visit.

I'M ALWAYS TOUCHED BY YOUR PRESENCE DEER

Nick Redfern passed on this following uncredited letter dated 12th December 2001:

In the Dallas Morning News on Sunday, sports section, a biology professor, working on deer distribution in East Texas, has set out some feeders, last Spring if I remember correctly, along with motion detectors and flash cameras. Among the deer he got photos of was a white-tail (the most common in Texas), that had its flanks covered in small white spots.

According to the biologist, no one has ever seen a spotted white-tail, ever, according to every one he could find to ask. Indeed, this one deer was clearly photoed at two different stands fairly close together, at night, but no hunter has ever mentioned seeing this particular deer, or any like it. There was some thought that perhaps this is a cross between a white-tail and an axis deer, a non-native species that was released into the hunting areas of Central Texas several years ago that is spotted. But the

biologist thought that unlikely, as there are no axis deer in East Texas, and he would have expected one to turn up first in Central Texas, if there was any cross-breeding at all, and no one knows of it happening yet after all these years.

Anyway, a classic *"got a photo but don't know what it is"*. Maybe it was a victim of paintball practice, who knows. But interesting.

The *Electronic Telegraph* on 3rd December 2001 reported that the world's smallest reptile, a dwarf lizard the size of a penny, has been discovered on a Caribbean island. The Jaragua gecko was found on Beata Island, off the southernmost point of the Dominican Republic. It is thought to be unique to the island and nearby parts of the mainland.

The animal is so small - about three-quarters of an inch long, or 16mm, from snout to tail - that it has been overlooked by biologists studying the island for hundreds of years. It ranks as the smallest of all 23,000 known species of reptile, bird and mammal.

The Caribbean islands are already home to some of the world's smallest creatures.

- The smallest bird, the bee hummingbird, just 5cm long, is found only in Cuba.
- The world's smallest snake, the Lesser Antillean Thread, is so slim that it could slither through a pencil if the lead was removed.
- The northern hemisphere's tiniest frog, an amphibian rather than a reptile, is the 1cm-long Monte Iberia Eleuth. It also is found in the Caribbean.

THIS ISSUE'S MANE STORY

From the newsletter of the African Lion Working Group [ALWG], vol3 August 2001:

UNIDENTIFIED MANED CAT SPOTTED IN TURKMENISTAN?:

Chris and Tilde Stewart
African-Arabian Wildlife Research Centre

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Although outside the realm of the ALWG, the following will be of interest to you.

A friend of ours was recently in Garashyzyk in Turkmenistan, some 30 miles from the mountain range dividing Turkmenistan from Iran. She had a report from an Australian who is driller in charge of oil exploration in this area that one of his crew had had a clear sighting of a maned big cat, which he said was a lion.

There are known to be leopard in the area but if this is indeed a correct identification someone should investigate. This is a very wild area where few, if any, zoologists have worked. It also lies in the area where some of the last lion sightings were made in the 1950's and possibly later

We will certainly be following this up and keep you informed.

EDITOR'S NOTE: We have been unable to find any citations for lion sightings in Asia apart from those in the Gir Forest later than those mentioned by Guggisberg (1974) who noted Iranian lions in 1923, 1928 and 1929, as well as animals seen in Mesopotamia during the first world war.

THE WORLD'S LARGEST LITTER TRAY

Finally those who believe in the Eastern Cougar have been vindicated. According to the *Michigan Free Press* November 1, 2001 New DNA evidence offers irrefutable proof that cougars roam the woods of the Upper Peninsula and northern Lower Peninsula, the Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation reported.

Cougars, also known as mountain lions, were supposed to have been killed off 95 years ago in Michigan. Sightings have been reported since then, but no scientific corroboration had been made.

Now it has, said Dr. Patrick Ruzs, the habitat foundation's director of wildlife programs. Field studies were conducted last spring and summer, and DNA analysis by the Wyoming Game and Fish laboratory confirmed that faeces was found from seven

cougars, Ruzs said. Five were in the UP, two in the northern Lower Peninsula.

Ruzs suspects that the UP is home to 20-30 of the big cats, which can reach 200 pounds or more.

In addition to DNA evidence, experts confirmed that plaster casts of paw prints found in the UP and near Mesick and Tower in the Lower Peninsula are cougar tracks. In eight days of searching areas where cougar sightings had been reported, Ruzs's team also came across the carcasses of several deer that were killed and eaten in a method characteristic only of cougars.

"The sand dunes and beaches along the Lake Michigan shoreline turned out to be a gigantic natural litter box" where it was unexpectedly easy to find cougar droppings, Ruzs said. The animals are not escaped pets or transients but an established breeding population, he said. Ruzs said he thinks more detailed DNA research will document the genetic relationships and even the sex of the animals that left the faeces, commonly called scat.

"These cougars are a remnant population," Ruzs said. "Wildlife doesn't work like Noah's ark, at least not for big carnivores. They can't breed like rabbits after their numbers are knocked down. The Michigan cougar population is an example of what happens as a result of generations of in-breeding."

Although the state Department of Natural Resources traditionally has said the last Michigan cougar was killed in Chippewa County in 1906, the agency continued to get reports of cougar sightings. Many were from its own forestry workers and conservation officers.

RETURN TO METEBELIS THREE

A German scientist has rediscovered a spider with the longest legs in the world. He found the spider with a leg span of 30 centimetres in the cellar of a Paris museum. It was discovered in 1939 in Southeast Asia but has lain unseen for years preserved in alcohol in the museum's store.

Biologist Peter Jaeger says the previous Guinness Book record holder was a South American spider with a leg span of 28 centimetres. He has named the spider as *Heteropoda maxima*. It was brought back from Laos by

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a cave explorer and belongs to the family of giant crab spiders, Sparassidae. Its body measures between four and five centimetres. (*Ananova 17.10.2001*)

ZEY WERE JUST FOLLOWING ORDERS

The following news story was culled from the two websites below:

http://www.ananova.com/news/story/sm_548375.html
<http://www.namibian.com.na/2002/march/news/024CF46442.html>

As we go to press, no further details are available, but it seems a potentially very important discovery.

An international team of scientists have apparently announced that a new insect order has been found to exist in the Brandberg area of western Namibia. The last new insect order was discovered 87 years ago. The discovery, according to the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, is being compared to "major twentieth century discoveries like the Coelacanth fish and Wollemi pine tree - all species thought to be extinct".

A new insect order was last discovered in 1915 when another cricket-like insect was found to occur above the snow line on very high mountains in North America, Europe and the Far East. Currently there are 30 insect orders in the world. The latest discovery will increase the tally to 31 orders.

Yesterday's announcement follows a scientific expedition to the Brandberg area this month - which was sponsored by Conservation International, the National Museum of Namibia and the institutions at which the different international scientists are working. The expedition was to investigate the insect order, after its existence was first mooted in 2001.

Local scientist Eugene Marais, the Curator of Entomology at the National Museum of Namibia, led the expedition that lasted for several days. A Ministry of Education press release said the story behind the discovery "sounds almost like a real life enactment of the film Jurassic Park". During the expedition, live

and dead specimens of the newly-discovered insect order were collected and will be sent to Germany where they will be studied for up to six years.

The study will determine the exact habitat requirements of the order, and individuals will be observed to get more information on the behaviour and food requirements of the insect.

Some insects will have to be killed to obtain specimens for the proper description of the species, to determine their gut contents, and to determine their evolutionary history through morphological and genetic analysis. Other areas of the study will include the insect's life cycle, its hunting, mating and reproductive behaviour.

During yesterday's post-expedition press briefing one of the entomologists, Phil Bragg, said because of the terrain and other ecological factors at Brandberg the insect appears to have had no interaction with other species and may have remained like that for thousands of years.

"It (Brandberg) is a very old area. These insects have been there thousands or millions of years with little interaction" with other insect species.

The team, however, had problems in feeding the insects that will be transported to Germany on "loan" from the National Museum of Namibia, said Esther Moombola-Goagoses.

Conservation International hopes the global attention the Brandberg area might receive as a result of the discovery could encourage local and international agencies to assist Namibia to establish management structures for conservation in the area.

Once such management is in place, Namibia will be able to nominate the Brandberg to Unesco as a World Heritage Site and possibly also a World Biosphere Reserve.

The international scientific expedition to Brandberg was sponsored by Conservation International, the National Museum of Namibia, the Museum for Comparative Zoology (Cambridge, USA), Oxford University Museum (UK), Natural History Museum (UK), Museum for Comparative Zoology, (Cambridge, USA), Museum für Naturkunde, (Berlin Germany) and the Max Planck Institute for Limnology.

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ICE TO MEET YOU

A news item from South Carolina on the 31st August 2001 seems far too good to be true, and as people so often have observed in these pages, if something seems too good to be true then it probably is. The radio report proclaimed proudly that "The mystery of Sasquatch may finally be solved thanks to a South Carolina man who claims he is in possession of a Bigfoot corpse."

The story goes on to tell how 30-year-old Simon Garth claims he shot and killed the creature in self-defence on the previous weekend after it pelted him with rocks during a camping trip.

He described how he dragged the dead Bigfoot to his pick-up truck and hauled the creature to his brother-in-law's house, where the corpse supposedly is now sitting in a meat freezer.

Garth claims the Bigfoot is 6 feet tall, weighs around 285 pounds and smells like "bad eggs." According to the radio report, he plans to sell the corpse to the highest bidder and says he hopes the Discovery Channel will be interested because he thinks they'll treat the creature "... with more dignity than ABC or CBS."

This story has more holes in it than the proverbial colander. On the surface, at least it is a palpable hoax put together as a mish-mash of bits of well known

BHM lore. The stone throwing incident mirrors the story of Rant Mullins of Toledo, Washington who in 1924 claimed to have been attacked by stone throwing sasquatch in the eponymously named Ape Canyon. The body in the freezer story mirrors that of the so-called Minnesota Iceman – an artefact frozen in ice and owned by showman Frank Hansen that no-one apart from the late Bernard Heuvelmans and the even later Ivan T Sanderson seem to have taken seriously. This whole affair should, we feel, be taken *cum grano salis*.

That being said, knowing the way that the universe works, it will probably turn out to be completely true!

EDITOR'S NOTE : Another phone in competition. The first person to telephone me on +1392 424811 telling me who said the words that we have used as headline to this piece and in what circumstances will get a free four issue subscription...

KYRGYZIA KONG

In early September 2001 *Pravda* reported that a frontier guard claims to have found what could be Bigfoot footprints in the Kyrgyzia Republic in Central Asia. The tracks were 45cm (17.7 inches) long and 30cm wide (11.8 inches) and are reported to have been clearly visible because they were outlined against the clay bank of a mountain river flowing through the deserted area. Experts say enthusiasts had been searching for a Bigfoot in the neighbouring Pamirs 20 years ago. According to *Pravda*, they believe the creature might have moved to Kyrgyzia because it was scared by military actions in the mountains of Tajikistan. But it says Kyrgyzia is unlikely to find the money to fund a scientific expedition to discover the true origins of the prints.

BLURRY BIGFOOT

The following picture was sent to us by Nick Redfern who found it posted up on Jeff Rense's website. Its provenance is unclear – the only comment being this from the person who allegedly took the photograph:

"I was out planting trees in the liquid sunshine that we have here in Oregon. I caught something out of the corner of my eye. When I turned around I saw this guy watching me. He was just hunkered down next to a

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winter lagoon. I grabbed my camera and snapped a few pics, and then quietly moseyd away. Neither the dog nor the horse were bothered by him in the least!

Marsha

Not to anyone's surprise (least of all ours) the 'bigfoot' turned out to be a rotten tree stump. It says wallages about the internet and the crypto community therein that although this picture was and is circulated widely, the close up pictures revealing the tree stump in all its glory have not been



extinctions

GET YER SKATES ON

On Thursday March 21, 2002 *The Guardian* reported that the common skate has become extinct in the North Sea and European environment ministers are so alarmed that other species, such as cod, herring and whiting, will follow that they have agreed that hundreds of square miles should be closed to fishing.

A scientific report to ministers meeting in Norway on fish stocks said beam trawling, which involves dragging nets along the bottom of the sea with chains to force sole and plaice up into the net, has wiped out many seabed species, including skate.

THAT'S THAT FOR GUJARAT

Tigers are now officially extinct in the Indian state of Gujarat. The 2001 census found no trace of the "majestic cat" once found in great numbers in the state. Forest department officials say there has been a gradual decline since the 1950s but tigers were not even wandering into the area from neighbouring states. Read the full story at http://www.ananova.com/yournews/story/sm_441717.html



THE BLOB

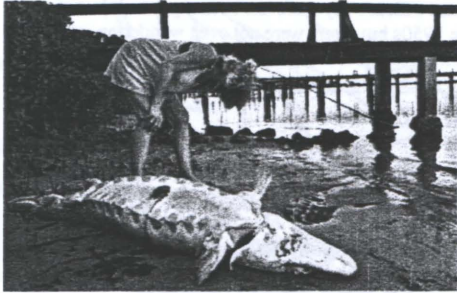
According To the *Dallas Morning News* of the 20th March 2002, scientists at the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans, have analysed tissue samples from the mysterious carcass washed up in Newfoundland during August 2001. (See A&M 25).

At the university, scientists extracted DNA from four chunks of tissue, looking to identify the unique chemical sequence that each species carries as its DNA. Because the lab's machine wasn't working, the researchers had to mail the samples off to a commercial laboratory. They then compared the sea monster DNA to a worldwide database of known animal genes. The closest match, with greater than 99 percent certainty was a sperm whale.

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Sperm whales live off southern Newfoundland, and, occasionally, identifiable carcasses wash ashore there. The "gills" turned out to be flesh from between the whale's ribs. The "hairs" were actually abraded tissue mixed with sand and seaweed.

CAVIAR CORPSE



In the eight years we have been publishing *Animals and Men* we have received some ridiculous news items. The general level of zoological knowledge of people in general and those in the media specifically is lamentable, but the following news item really takes the proverbial biscuit. It is taken verbatim from the *St. Petersburg Times*, of March 16, 2002:

"A St. Petersburg couple will send photos to the experts after a day of guesswork in the bay area. Looking out the window of his Shore Acres home Friday, former Tampa Bay Buccaneers lineman Jeff Winans wasn't sure what had washed ashore. Up close, it looked like some bizarre, armour-plated fish from a prehistoric era. It was white and about 5 feet long, with a flat snout and a sucker for a mouth. It had rows of bony yellow plates that appeared to be made of cartilage.

"When you turn him over, his whole back side is hard as a rock," said Brandi Winans. "I grew up on St. Pete Beach. I've snorkeled a lot. I've never seen anything remotely like this." The couple called the Florida Marine Research Institute in St. Petersburg, but no one was available to identify the mystery fish. Send photos, the institute said.

The couple called a local TV station. WTSP. Ch. 10 sent a cameraman to shoot footage of the fish for Friday evening's newscast. After the beast's TV debut, the station received lots of calls from people offering their best guess.

"One guy said it was ... an underwater carnivore related to the same family as a platypus," said Jim Peppard, a night assignment desk editor at WTSP. "Another guy thought it was a coelacanth, which he said was a 6-million-year-old fish that everybody thought was extinct until it was found in the '50s off the coast of China."

EDITORIAL NOTE: Just in case anyone didn't know, the platypus had no fossil giant relatives. And the coelacanth was found in the 1930s, off South Africa after a break of 65 million years. However for the definitive comment on the St Petersburg carcass we went to Ichthyologist Charles Paxton....

The Tampa Bay "monster" is a sturgeon. The single pair of gill slits, scales, and rayed fins indicates a bony fish. The prominent snout, Weird mouth and big scales suggest a sturgeon. Species identification of sturgeon is more difficult from a photo but the general locality and the presence of a nearby release program would suggest it is a Gulf Sturgeon a sub species of *Acipenser oxyrhynchus*; the Atlantic sturgeon which can reach 2.5 m and occurs along the Eastern seaboard of North America. This species migrates between freshwater and the sea. It is also known to jump out of the water which must be a stunning sight.

THE MONSTER OF SOUTHPORT (and we don't mean Tim Matthews)

On Valentine's Day the *Liverpool Echo* announced that the manager of the Martin Mere nature reserve in West Lancashire is convinced there is something large lurking in the deeps. Some creature, say staff at the reserve, is responsible for dragging fully grown swans into one of their lakes.

Several visitors witnessed the swan trying to flee the grasp of a giant underwater predator. In an earlier incident, the 20-acre lake where swans gather was left deserted as they all refused to go on to the water.

"Something is completely spooking them," commented

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reserve manager Chris Tomlinson.

"On two occasions, both Thursdays, January 17 and February 7, something in the water has caused the 1,500-plus wild wintering swans to completely disappear".

Centre manager Pat Wisniewski adds: "Whatever it was out there last night must have been pretty big to pull a swan back into the water. Swans weigh up to 13 kilos". Pat added: "This could be an extremely large pike, or a Wels catfish. Both conceivably could survive in the rather murky, de-oxygenated water for years and grow to an extremely large size".

Four years ago Pat spotted something that appeared to be the size of a small car circling the mere just below the waterline of the lake, which is four metres deep. One theory is that something may have made its way into the mere through its drainage system many years ago as a juvenile and remained there ever since having grown too large to escape.

OKEECHOBEE OROBOUROS

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following news report was e-mailed to the International Fortean Research Society newslist on the 5th October 2001. We have no citation or source but found the story interesting enough to print anyway.

Lake Okeechobee is near the tip of Florida. It is about 40 miles square and is surrounded by swamp land and with rivers that connect it to the sea. If anyone has any more information on this singular lake monster we would be very grateful...

PAHOKEE, Fla. – Over the past three months, more than 30 people have seen a gigantic reptile similar to the Loch Ness Monster – swimming in Florida's Lake Okeechobee! Since early March, officials in Martin, Palm Beach and Glades counties have been besieged with reports from tourists and fishermen

Witnesses describe a scaly creature with a long neck, resembling a dinosaur emerging from Florida's largest lake. The beast dubbed the Lake Okeechobee Monster is estimated to be about 65 feet in length – a good 10 to 15 feet longer than Scotland's Loch Ness Monster.

And according to descriptions, it is even more terrifying-looking than Nessie.

Most witnesses have seen it only from a distance – few closer than 50 or 60 yards. But some have seen it all too close up. Perhaps the most dramatic account comes from local fisherman Mark Tagerton, whose small boat was capsized by the huge animal. *"I'll never get over it as long as I live," said Tagerton. "The water had been rough and choppy all day. It was weird because there wasn't a lot of wind. About 4 o'clock in the afternoon, the water started churning and the boat started rocking like crazy. All of a sudden -- I get chills just talking about it -- this sea-monster thing just raised out of the water, not 50 feet from the boat.*

"I was petrified. It just paused there a moment, watching me. "Then, all of a sudden, it lunged forward and crashed down against the surface of the water right beside my boat. It sounded like thunder. The impact caused such a massive wake that the boat tipped over lengthwise.

"I thought the thing was going to eat me. But it just disappeared." Fortunately, another boater who had been fishing nearby saw the entire epi-isode and came over to pull Tagerton out of the water.

Three law enforcement officials in towns around the lake's perimeter, speaking off the record, say they've heard reports of the Lake Okeechobee Monster for years, but only recently have there been so many sightings so close together.

Australian zoologist Dr. Victor Tandy has been in the US collecting photos and documents, and studying the baffling phenomena firsthand since mid-April. But he says he has no explanation for the increased number of sightings in recent months.

"I don't know if it's because the drought has disturbed its habitat, or just because of increasing environmental problems on the lake," he said. "And though I've never seen it myself, I'm convinced something is down there -- and it's been down there for many years.

"And I'm also convinced that something is drawing it to the surface more frequently than ever before. It's a mystery I intend to solve."

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MANILLA GODZILLA

monsters."

The Inquirer News Service on the 14th January 2002 told the strange story of how five "huge, black creatures" have dwelled in the Tikis River in the Philippines near the former mining village of Buhawen here, stirring fears among Aeta families living in the village. The Aetas' oral history has no account of giant fish or strange mammals thriving in the tribe's indigenous habitat. "There! Look there! One is appearing now from the bushes on the northern side!" yelled Joel Serrano, a village councilman, whose hut in Sitio Labuan in Buhawen overlooks the river.

On Saturday, at 1:45 p.m., the strange creatures were seen swimming in the river below Labuan, which is enclosed by tall, thick bushes. Observed with bare eyes from a hill some 300 meters west of the river, the first creature that came into sight was about seven feet long and three feet wide. Dark black in hue, it was visible enough from that distance. Slowly, it glided and took cover again in the bushes. Serrano and barangay *ianod* Alfredo Baños said four other similar creatures, one of which was "parang jeep kalaki (as big as a jeepney)," never emerged in full form.

"We don't know if they are fishes or snakes or eels because they never show their heads or tails," Serrano said in Kapampangan. The creatures, according to him, were first spotted last Nov. 5. An Aeta boy mistook these for floating logs, Serrano recalled. The elongated outlines of the creatures were slightly bared every time the wind blew and caused ripples in the river. These have not produced any sound at daytime or at night. Exactly what these creatures are has baffled the 15 Aeta families who live in Labuan, according to Baños. What they do know is that danger possibly lurks in the river. Children have been ordered to stop bathing there. The men and women have stopped catching fish. "The children are afraid. When they come here (at the hill) to view those creatures, they wonder what those things really are. We don't have answers to their questions," said Baños. Serrano is worried about the stopping of fishing activities in the village, some 30 km from San Marcelino town proper. *"Frogs are our only source of protein source,"* he added. These, according to the two tribal leaders, are the reasons they want *"biasang au (scientists) to come and help them end the mystery surrounding what may yet be 'Pinatubo*



POLLY WANTS A CRACKER

The Times of March 07, 2002 announced that a fifth species of exotic parrot has just started breeding successfully in the wild in southeast England and other sightings have been reported in Merseyside and Cornwall. The blue-crowned parakeet, *Aratinga acuticaudata*, is normally an inhabitant of Bolivia, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil and Argentina. Grant Hazlehurst, secretary of Kent Ornithological Society, says two first appeared in Bromley, southeast London, in 1997 and by 1999 the number in the area had increased to 15.

Dr Hazlehurst said: *"It's fascinating seeing how birds from wild places in tropical South America adapt to living in a built-up area in southeast England. They seem to be doing very well."*

PAPA'S GOT A BRAND NEW JAG

The Associated Press announced on Feb. 6, 2002 that a young male jaguar had been photographed by a motion-activated camera set out in southern Arizona to monitor potential jaguar corridors near the U.S.-Mexico border. The photo shot in early December gave state

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game officials new evidence that jaguars, the biggest cats in the Western Hemisphere, visit the southern part of the state and may even live there. "It is great to know that jaguars are roaming our borderlands, at least occasionally," said Brad Van Pelt of the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

"We will continue to monitor the area to see if the animal is a transient or attempting to establish a territory."

Jaguars were last documented in Arizona in 1996 in the Baboquivari Mountains west of Tucson and in the Peloncillo Mountains, along the New Mexico state line near San Simon, Ariz. Biologists believe the two 1996 photos and the one shot in December captured three separate cats.



Arizona is believed to be at the northern end of the jaguar's historic range, which once covered nearly all of Latin America. The closest known population to Arizona now is 135 miles south of Tucson, deep in the Sierra Madre of Mexico, according to game officials. Conservation groups that want to see the jaguar repopulate the American Southwest were delighted by the new photographic evidence.

aNd FinAlly

GRUESOME MOOSE-OME TWOSOME

According to the *Anchorage Daily News* of February 23, 2002 a two-headed fetus was discovered earlier in February in a cow moose harvested near Clear Air Force Station – alarming some Native elders and baffling biologists.



The foot-long moose-to-be had two heads and four legs emerging from the same small body, said Jim Simon, who oversees a traditional foods assessment program for the Tanana Chiefs Conference in Fairbanks. It has been frozen pending a detailed biological study that will include X-rays, a dissection and tissue testing.

"We're going to try to explain it and do good science and get back to the community," Simon said. "As far as we know, the scientific literature has no reports of two-headed moose, so now we're trying to beat the bushes for tribal communities to see whether it's been reported in the North."

THE NICEST STORY OF THE YEAR SO FAR.....

A farmer and his family in India say they can't believe a tiger entered their hut in the middle of the night and just went to sleep. The tiger entered Prasun Kalita's hut in West Bengal's Gosaba village while he and his family were sleeping. They're amazed it didn't attack them. In the morning, they left it sleeping and got help. It's now been released into the wild. The farmer was sleeping in the hut with his wife and three children, the Pragati newspaper reports. Mr Kalita says he found the tiger the next morning "sleeping like a baby". They left quietly so they didn't disturb the animal. "It's a miracle we didn't end up as dinner for the tiger. We can only thank Goddess Durga that he slept through the night and did nothing to us," the farmer said after alerting local authorities. Animal experts arrived to tranquillise the tiger. They then transported it to the jungle. A forest department spokesman said: "We are happy there were no casualties. The tiger had strayed far from its natural habitat and was probably too tired to even bother about the sleeping people." - *Ananova*, Tuesday 12th February 2002

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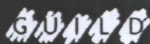
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OBITUARY

Mary Downes (1922-2002)

My Mother died, after a short battle with multiple cancers, at ten to eight GMT on the 12th March 2002. I am writing this scarcely three hours later as the initial numbness hasn't really even begun to wear off. No doubt, in the future I will dedicate a book to my mother, and even get around to finishing the book that I have been writing about my childhood as an amateur naturalist in Hong Kong, in which she features heavily. No doubt I will eventually be able to put everything into perspective, and be able to pay her a better tribute than I am able to now. But all that is in the future. For now I am writing this for me.

If it wasn't for my Mother I sincerely doubt whether there would be a Centre for Fortean Zoology. At least if there was, it wouldn't have been me who started it. It was she who initially turned me onto the idea of strange monsters, as earlier she had turned me onto the subject of natural history itself.

Mary Rawlins was born in 1922, her father had been a pilot in the Royal Flying Corps. She was in her early teens, in Chipping Norton in the Cotswolds when she made friends with my father, initially through his elder sister Mary, and a relationship which was to last sixty-five years was born. During the war whilst my father was in the Battle of the Atlantic, she was a teacher working with evacuees. She became engaged to my father on VE Day and they married in 1947. After five years living in North Devon my father joined the Overseas Civil Service and they moved to Nigeria. During the eight years they spent in West Africa my mother wrote a number of books of collected Hausa folklore under the pen-name *Yar Kunama*. These books, published by Harraps, which were still in print well into the 1970s, were aimed at teaching Nigerian schoolchildren English.

After a series of tragic miscarriages I was born in 1959, and a year or so later my father was transferred to Hong Kong where my brother Richard was born in 1963.

By the age of five my mother had imbued me with a great love of the natural world. Every afternoon she would take me to the local playing area, where she would sit, with my infant brother in his playpen while I hunted for caterpillars, dragonflies and small lizards. I would bear these back to my mother in triumph and she would tell me what they were, and as much about them as she could.

She read my stories by Gerald Durrell and Rudyard Kipling and together we explored books on the Hong Kong Countryside and found to our great amazement that animals straight out of *The Jungle Book* like the Dhole, the Tiger, the Leopard, the mongoose and the cobra were/had been found in Hong Kong. I must have been only eight or nine when she first read me the novels of H.Rider-Haggard. These (especially *The Ivory Child*) introduced me to the concept of monster hunting, and when one day in 1968, she found me a book called *Myth or Monster* (a compendium of cryptozoological curiosities) in the public library, my path in life was set out in stone.

My family returned to England in 1971, and for the next thirty one years my parents lived in the small North-Devon village of Woolfardisworthy. My parents threw themselves into village life as enthusiastically as they had once become involved in administering the far flung branches of the British Empire. I lived with them until 1976 when I went away to school. I finally left home soon after and our paths in life diverged to some extent. They continued to travel widely and visited Canada, Spain, Morocco, The West Indies, South Africa (on numerous occasions) and even the tiny British Colony of St Helena.

When I started the Centre for Fortean Zoology in 1992 both my parents were supportive, but my mother, in particular, understood my quest for what lies beyond that elusive next turn in the road.

Over the last few years she has been in declining health, and after being taken ill during a visit to

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Spain in February was admitted to hospital the day after they returned to the UK. As you already know, she died this morning. During her last days she told my father that she didn't want either of her sons to come and see her in hospital. She wanted us to remember her as she had been rather than the terminally ill old woman she had become. Although it was terribly hard, we respected her wishes, but now it is my privilege to share my memories of her with you.

Goodbye Mum, and thank you.

MORE SAD NEWS

As we were going to press we received the sad news that Craig Heinselman, editor of *Crypto* magazine, and one of the team behind the *North American Bio Fortean Review* is ill with brain cancer.

He has asked that he be allowed to withdraw from the Crypto-zoological arena quietly and with dignity so that he can spend time with his wife and family. He has said categorically that he does not want to be inundated with telephone calls and e-mails.

We have also heard that Richard Greenwell from the ISC is also desperately ill.

We hope that you all join with us in remembering them (and their families) in your prayers to whatever deities you believe in.

OBITUARY

Roly Holloway (1943-2002)

The Centre for Fortean Zoology will be the first to admit that we are not the easiest people to live next to. We are noisy, keep odd hours and have a menagerie of peculiar creatures that have a habit of escaping into the next door garden.

About ten years ago, within a few months of the CFZ coming into existence, a quiet and very straight and respectable looking couple came to live in the house next to us. Within days of their arrival three polecats that I was breeding for research into what eventually became *The Smaller Mystery Carnivores of the Westcountry* escaped into their garden. I climbed over their fence to try and retrieve them. I was greeted by a cheerful looking man who was not only unfazed by my trespassing in his garden but helped me to recapture my errant mustelids.

"Hi, I'm Roly" he said with a quiet smile. A few days later we met his wife Leigh and we embarked upon a happy relationship which was to last for the rest of their lives. Leigh died of cancer in 1999, and in her final days she was so weak that Richard had to carry her up the flight of steps which lead from the car park to the terrace of houses in which we live. Roly dealt with Leigh's death in such a brave manner that no-one who knew him could help but be moved almost to tears by his courage. He picked himself up, dusted himself down, and when a year or so later he met a lovely lady called Rita on the Internet we all gave a figurative cheer. When she moved in with him we congratulated him and thanked the Lord that his life had finally taken a turn for the better.

I'll always remember him sitting on my front step with Tony Healey talking about UFOs, and Australian mystery animals with a quiet and real intelligence. With Rita he attended the 2001 weird weekend and was always interested in our projects and adventures. Then in the late autumn of 2001 he was diagnosed with multiple cancers. The night before he died in January Richard and I sat with Rita by his bed in the hospice and he bravely ignored his own illness, asking us for news of our projects and animals. He was a quiet, kind and gentle man and I feel that my life has been enriched by having known him

JON DOWNES

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Grover S. Krantz (1931-2002)

By Loren Coleman



Grover S. Krantz, an anthropologist who was never afraid to take the unpopular academic position that the primates called Sasquatch actually exist, died peacefully, on the morning February 14, 2002, in his Port Angeles, Washington home

As the modern era's first academically-affiliated physical anthropologist to actively involve himself in Bigfoot/Sasquatch research, Dr. Krantz was one of the most quoted authorities on the status of the controversy. He began his research in 1963, and it took him from the analysis of the

Patterson-Gimlin film of 1967, to an examination of the Skookum body cast of 2000. He wrote or edited several papers on the Sasquatch, of a formal scholarly nature (published in *Northwest Anthropological Research Notes*) and four books, *The Scientist Looks at the Sasquatch* (Moscow: University Press of Idaho, 1977, with anthropologist Roderick Sprague), *The Scientist Looks at the Sasquatch II* (Moscow: University Press of Idaho, 1979, with Roderick Sprague), *The Sasquatch and Other Unknown Hominoids* (Calgary: Western Publishing, 1984, with archaeologist Vladimir Markotic) and *Big Footprints* (Boulder: Johnson, 1992), revised as *Bigfoot Sasquatch Evidence* (Seattle: Hancock House, 1999).

Dr. Krantz, as an outspoken academic, was a focus of the 1999 documentary *Sasquatch Odyssey* (director Peter von Puttkamer), which also profiled the late Rene Dahinden, John Green, and Peter Byrne. While these men did not often get along, they formed the "Four Horseman of Sasquatchery," the foundation of thought on these unknown hominoids in the Pacific Northwest from the 1960s onward.

Dr. Krantz was the primary North American spokesperson for the stance of killing a Bigfoot to prove they exist. He will most be remembered, however, as the foremost proponent of the theory that the survival of the giant ape *Gigantopithecus*, recently thought to be extinct, is the source of modern Sasquatch reports. He created the first reconstructions of the full skulls of *Gigantopithecus* and *Meganthropus*, as well as restoring various elements of understudied *Homo erectus* finds. During the late 1990s, Dr. Krantz became one of the major supporters, in academia and in court, for the preservation for study of the disputed Kennewick skull which he theorised might have a non-native American origin.

Grover S. Krantz, born in 1931, in Salt Lake City, grew up in Rockford, Illinois, then moving with his family to Utah when he was ten. Krantz went on to study at the Universities of Utah, California (B.A. 1955, M. A. 1958) and Minnesota (Ph. D. 1971), with a concentration in human evolution. He was a professor at Washington State University since 1968, until his retirement in the 1990s. During his

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retirement, he still taught one anthropology course per year, beamed via television back to Pullman, from his home in the Olympic Peninsula. He continued his research until his illness allowed him to do no more work.

Dr. Krantz was a physical anthropologist whose teaching and research had covered all aspects of human evolution, primarily of skeletal traits, but also the evolution of the human capacity for culture.

He had visited many museums in Europe, China and Java to study original fossils and to make casts of some (Java) for distribution to other scientists.

He had accumulated a major collection of such casts, including his own reconstructions of many of them. Dr. Krantz's major non-Sasquatch anthropological works were *Climatic Races and Descent Groups* (1980), *The Antiquity of Race* (1981, 1994, 1998), *The Process of Human Evolution* (1982, 1995), and *Geography Development of European Languages* (1988).

Other publications included original work on such topics as Neanderthal winter survival, precision gripping of stone tools, language origins, mastoid function, tooth wear, mammal extinctions, sea-level changes, nonmigrations of hunting peoples, Neanderthal taxonomy, *Ramapithecus* as a female form, and pelvic evolution - all illustrated by the author.

Dr. Krantz died from pancreatic cancer.

The always active Grover Krantz went into decline soon after he told cryptozoologist Loren Coleman on December 6, 2001:

"Medicine men differ as to whether I have months or years to live." Such reflected the final uphill battle that Grover faced in a life of challenges. Diane Horton, his wife, was with him constantly, to the end.

Grover S. Krantz's candid assessments in hominology and towering vision in cryptozoology will be missed by the many people who have followed his work for decades, but his thoughts

and concepts will remain to continue educating generations to come.

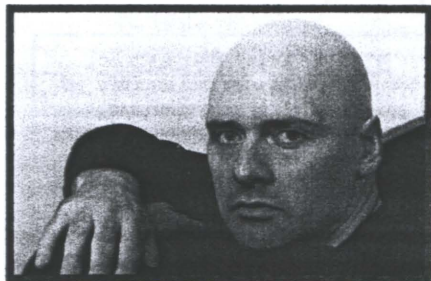
According to Diane Horton: *"There will be no local service. Grover's body will be sent to the 'Body Farm' at the University of Tennessee and then his skeleton will be sent to the Smithsonian Institution along with most of his academic materials. As he helped students in life, his skeleton and materials will be available to serious scholars in death. In lieu of flowers, people can make memorial donations to Hospice of Clallam County, P.O. Box 2014, Port Angeles, WA 98362."*

"I fully accept the Patterson film," Grover Krantz was quoted in 1999. Bigfoot's loping gait is *"consistent with a 500-pound biped,"* he said. *"I've attempted to imitate it, and I really can't do it worth a damn."*



A fond farewell also to Spike Milligan 1919-2002 and Dudley Moore 1939-2002 but for whom Richard and Jon would not be who they are today

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Nick Redfern's Letter from

@merica

As some of you may know, last year I departed from the green and sometimes-pleasant land that is England for pastures new – the USA and the sunny climes of Texas.

Was it a difficult and emotional move, people ask? Was it heck, I reply. [EDITOR'S NOTE: He didn't actually say 'heck' but that's another story] But let's begin at the best place for all stories: the beginning!

On a Monday evening in late January 2001, I was sat on Jon's couch, comfortably filled to the brim with *Special Brew* and a deliciously champion meal cooked by Richard (or Little Dickie F. as I affectionately refer to him), and musing on whether to annoy the neighbourhood by blasting out *My Girlfriend's Dead* by *The Vandals* (a song with which Jon has a particular affinity) or, for the umpteenth time, *Psycho-Therapy* by *The Ramones* (another song, strangely enough, that Jon holds dear to his heart and that, during several of his spectacularly unhinged moments I have spent many a happy hour tormenting him with).

Anyway, as I sat there I turned to Jon – who was merrily and with a distinctly perverse and sinister look on his face, downloading onto his hard-drive a photograph of Mrs Slocombe from the, er, "classic" 70s TV show *Are You Being Served?* that he wanted

to paste on the ceiling above his bed whilst simultaneously shouting at Richard to stop tormenting him by muttering "Mungo must kill" in his ear – and the conversation turned to the UFO Conference at Laughlin, Nevada, USA, that I was scheduled to speak at just a few weeks later.

THE CIA AND THE BIONIC CAT

Recently declassified Central Intelligence Agency files show that during the mid 1960s, the Agency attempted to uncover the deepest and darkest secrets of the KGB and the Kremlin by turning cats into walking, bionic, bugging devices.

In one experiment conducted at the height of the Cold War a cat, known within the confines of the CIA as "Acoustic Kitty", was wired up for use as a biological eavesdropping machine. It was hoped by CIA agents that the cat – which was extensively altered via surgery to allow for the implanting of sophisticated transmitting and control devices – would be able to listen to secret conversations from window sills, park benches or dustbins.

A retired CIA officer, Victor Marchetti, states that: "They slit the cat open, put batteries in him, wired him up. The tail was used as an antenna. They made a monstrosity. They tested him and tested him. They found he would walk off the job when he got hungry, so they put another wire in to override that."

The technology is thought to have cost the US taxpayer millions of dollars. Marchetti added: "They took it out to a park and put him out of the van, and a taxi comes and runs him over. There they were, sitting in the van with all those dials, and the cat was dead."

The relevant documentation – declassified from the CIA's elite and highly-secret Science and Technology Directorate – remains partly censored to this day.

The team that worked on the Acoustic Kitty project was praised for its hard work, however: "The work done on this problem over the years reflects great credit on the personnel who guided it . . . whose energy and imagination could be models for scientific pioneers."

Coincidentally, in 1966, a British film called *Spy With a Cold Nose* featured a dog wired up to eavesdrop on the Russians. It was the same year as the Acoustic Kitty was tested

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Both Jon and I had spoken there on previous occasions and, all bevvied up on t'Brew, I was laughingly and hopelessly trying to "plan" my talk. After the fifth can of Spesh I gave up and we spent the rest of the night (if not the entire week) as per usual talking rubbish, getting hammered and listening to Richard threaten to kill the sideboard because it had the misfortune to "bump into" him.

For years, I had been coming down to Jon's happy abode from that doss-hole known to one and all as the West Midlands every few weeks to just hang-out, 'ave a laff, drive around town while we all ranted out the windows of the car at startled passers-by and talk monster-stuff. At the end of the week, with my liver slightly more pickled than before and all three of us planning new projects and putting various plans into action, I said my farewells and headed home to arrange everything for Laughlin.

Little did I know it, but it was a conference that was to change my life: whilst there I met a hot babe named Dana Adair who, twelve months on, is now Dana Redfern and Walsall has been cashed in for the Texas town of Littlefield! But, I'm getting ahead of myself here.

UPCOMING BIGFOOT EVENTS

For those of you interested in the latest findings on Bigfoot, you may want to check out these forthcoming events that are taking place in the USA this year.

The Ohio Bigfoot Conference is being held on Saturday 6 April from 4.00 to 10.00 pm at the Newcomerstown Middle School Auditorium, Newcomerstown, Ohio. Admission is free. Contact Don Keating at eobic@yahoo.com On May 11 and 12 the International Western Bigfoot Society Conference takes place at Hillsboro, Oregon Fairgrounds. Contact Ray Crowe for details at raycrowe@aol.com

October 12 is the date for the annual Texas Bigfoot Conference at Jefferson, Texas. Guest speakers scheduled so far include Loren Coleman, Robert W. Morgan and William Dranginis. For details of the conference, email Craig Woolheater at texbigft@swbell.net

BIG CAT IN TEXAS

A big game hunt was launched at the Westpark Lakes in Fort Bend County, Texas, in 2001 where pets have been disappearing under unusual circumstances for some time. Locals are blaming it on a black panther that is rumoured to inhabit the area.

One man set a trap because he believed there was a panther in his backyard last August that killed his pet dog. According to the man: "I saw this big cat turn around that had my Schnauzer, limp, in its mouth. When it saw me, it turned around and jumped over the fence and took off."

He was of the opinion that the creature was a panther.

Large paw marks were left on the fence where the panther supposedly jumped off. Not only that, the homes sit on the edge of overgrown farmland where bobcats have occasionally been seen too. Neighbourhood animals, including ducks at the community pond, are said to be disappearing too. Another witness to the events in question stated: "I think there is a wild cat out here. I've seen them. I know there are wild cats out here."

Dana and I briefly returned to the UK for the L.A.P.I.S UFO Conference at Lytham St. Annes in May of last year and both Jon and Rich were on the speaker schedule (along with my good buddy Matt Williams, Andy Roberts and Dave Clarke). A fine time was had by all as we sat around at the Edensfield Hotel – again blitzed to the eyeballs whilst playing acoustic versions of Sex Pistols songs on Georgie Dave's guitar.

The Friday and Saturday nights were a riot. But, as is the case at all conferences where new friendships are formed and old friendships are rekindled, as everyone departed on the Sunday evening, and thoughts of the US filled my mind, I sensed somehow that an era had come to an end. But not everyone departed on the Sunday...

In addition to myself and Dana, Jon and Rich had managed to con an extra night's accommodation out of the organisers and all four of us sat in the bar until the early hours getting...yep, hammered again, planning the future and discussing old times. On the Monday morning all four of us staggered down to breakfast and again an air of finality and change was all-dominating. Dana and I

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planned on staying around another night but for Jon and Rich, the journey back home to the wilds of Devon was beckoning. And so it was that after me, Rich and Dana each had a mug of tea and Jon had a dry sherry, we all said our goodbye's amidst a realisation on the part of me, Jon and Rich that it might be a long, long time before any of us saw each other again.

Well, in the nine or ten months that have passed since the L.A.P.I.S conference, from our respective homes we all continue to stay in touch by phone and email on almost a daily basis – albeit now our drinking sessions are transatlantic toasts rather than nightly piss-ups in the CFZ lounge. Of course, in the time that has passed since emigrating I have not been resting on my laurels. Being the media-slag that I am, I have cultivated new contacts out here, opened new doors and continue to do what I do best (well one of the things I do best): have fun investigating mysteries, conspiracies and all things ufological and cryptozoological.

After telling Jon-boy what was going on out here, he asked me (in true *Wuthnail-Uncle Monty*-style): “My dear, dear boy I’m sitting here with a bottle of the finest wine known to humanity and cake and wondering, why don’t you write a regular column for *Animals & Men* – a letter from America if you will?” Okay Johnny, I will, I replied. And so...this is it! To be honest, my first year in the US has been even weirder than I imagined it ever would be and from a cryptozoological perspective has been distinctly enlightening.

For example in September of last year, we moved from Southern Texas where we had been living for several months and took a 24-hour drive in a removal van to our new home near the border of New Mexico (only 2 hours drive from Roswell – wheeee!).

Never before have I seen so much road-kill: domestic cats and dogs, squirrels, wild dogs, feral cats, skunks, spikey-looking things that had once probably been porcupines, an armadillo, and Gawd knows what else. But after hundreds of miles of road, we finally approached our new town and on doing so something truly unusual happened.

As we cruised along the highway and I tried to remember to keep the truck on the right-hand side of the road, I noticed something standing on an old railway line that runs adjacent to the road. At first, it

looked like a large dog with the thickest neck I have ever seen in my life. As we closed in, however, I was sure that what I was looking at was in fact a huge and powerful wolf. Not only that, whether or not it was a figment of my imagination to this day I don’t know, but a sudden feeling of unreality and a weird connection with the beast overcame me. For a split second our eyes locked and then it turned slowly, broke into a run and disappeared amongst the corn-fields. I never saw it again; but it was an uncanny way to start our new life. And the weirdness just keeps continuing.

As a result of one of those odd synchronicities that seem to beset those of us that investigate the mysteries of this world and beyond, I learned only days later of a curious encounter that occurred in our direct vicinity involving a “white Sasquatch”.

I’m interviewing the witness shortly and will be preparing a big write-up for the magazine. And if that were not enough, also living in our little hamlet is an artist who specialises in painting renditions of...wait for it...Bigfoot! Again, an extensive interview for *Animals & Men* is on the cards.

And what’s the deal with the old lady who walks the streets of the town when night falls and rants endlessly at the top of her voice about her involvement in the Kennedy assassination? What about the rumours of gargoyles living in the cellar of the big old house on the outskirts of town? All will be revealed. It’s a funny old world, innit?

For some reason, the dear boy seems incapable of writing an article without peppering it with insults about yours truly. However, what he is trying to say in his deliciously untutored *gamin* style is that as of the beginning of this year he has been running the US Office of the Centre for Fortean Zoology. Joking apart, we are very glad to have him. He is presently between permanent addresses but you can e-mail him at:

skywatcher4u@aol.com

TROY



23rd July 1991

to

3rd September 2001

This following article is dedicated to the memory of my own black dog and loyal companion Troy the Labrador. He accompanied me while researching Dark Dorset, visiting many of the localities featured in the book. A much loved friend of the family he will be sadly missed by those who knew and cared for him.

The Black Dog Of Lyme

By Mark North



A Brief Introduction to Black Dogs

'There stood a foul thing, a great, black beast, shaped like a hound, yet larger than any hound that ever mortal eye has rested upon.'

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: The Hound Of The Baskervilles (1902)

Accounts of spectral Black Dogs turn up with extraordinary regularity in the British Isles. Devon, Dorset, Somerset, East Anglia, Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and Worcester all boast of having at least one or several Black Dog sightings, some of which date back many centuries.

Though these supernatural creatures differ from county to county with their names they all share the same qualities. They are usually distinguished from other domesticated dogs by their large appearance, usually the size of a calf, with a black shaggy coat; huge fiery saucer-shaped eyes and their strange behaviour of vanishing at will or barring an entrance to a gate, stile or road to prevent travellers from proceeding further on their journey.

The Black Dog can take many forms and is often regarded as the Devil, a witch, a fairy, a messenger, a guardian of buried treasure, a protector of lost travellers, a churchyard grim or even Death itself.

The last guise being the most commonly associated with the black dog, that its pedigree can be traced far back as ancient Egypt where the much feared jackal-headed god of embalming, **Anubis** (pronounced Anu-bis) whose task was to take the souls of the dead before the judge of infernal regions. In ancient Greek mythology the death dog appears too, as the ferocious three-headed dog known as **Cerberus** (pronounced Sir-

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ber-us). Whose task was to guard the gates of the underworld of Hades, to prevent the dead from escaping. And even in Norse mythology we have a similar hound, *Garmr* (pronounced Garm), who was a huge black hound with a blood spattered breast, and eyes of burning coals watched over the gates of Hel, where he ushered the souls of the dead into the underworld.

Even in such old country sayings such as '*The Black Dog Is at his heels*' meant that a person was dying. We find the association with the black dog as a death omen has survived even to this day.

The Black Dog Of Lyme

One such tale that can be found in Dorset that concerns one of these spectral creatures occurred in the seventeenth century. When a lonely old man once owned Colway Manor near the town of Lyme Regis whose only companion was a loyal black dog.

One night as he retired for bed thieves broke into the house and demanded from him his hidden valuables, but the man refused. The thieves became angry and kicked and punched the man until he was dead. The dog however, was left at the foot of the stairs to pine for his master until he eventually died of starvation.

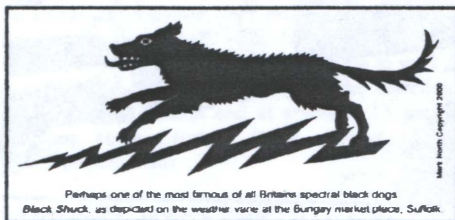
The manor was later destroyed during the Civil War and a farmhouse was built on the remaining part of the mansion. The farmhouse at that time still retained the large original fireplace and also two large antique seats, which were fixed either side of the alcove of the fireplace.

It was to these seats, every evening the new owner, a farmer, would relax. One evening his solace was interrupted by the arrival of an eerie black dog, which came to sit on the opposite seat to him. The farmer was at first uneasy, but after a time he became accustomed to his new companion's regular appearances.

Discussing his strange visitor with neighbours, he was constantly advised to be rid of it. The farmer, who didn't fancy the idea of confronting the animal, jokingly replied.

"Why should I? He is the quietest and frugalest creature about the farm, neither eating, drinking, nor interfering with anyone."

One evening while drinking with neighbours, the subject of his companion was discussed. The farmer who at the time was heavily drunk got so fed up with their mockery that he stormed off back home to confront the spectral beast.

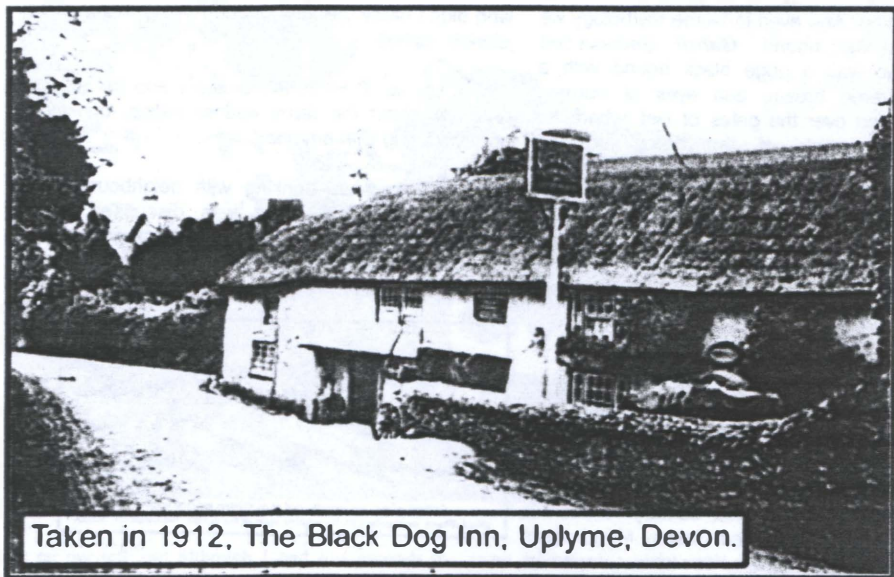


Perhaps one of the most famous of all Britain's spectral black dogs.
Black Shuck, as depicted on the weather vane at the Bungay market place, Suffolk.

On his return, and in a terrible state of rage, he found the dog sitting at its usual place upon the chimney seat. The farmer without any hesitation seized a poker and lunged at the dog. The dog quickly jumped off the seat and fled up stairs followed in hot pursuit by the angry farmer. He soon cornered the animal in the attic, but the dog leapt through the ceiling and disappeared. Infuriated the farmer struck a hard blow to the ceiling dislodging some of the plaster. From the hole an old box fell to the floor. The farmer picked up the box to find that it contained a considerable amount of gold and silver coins of the reign of Charles I.

He later decided to buy a house a mile west of Colway Manor, (*Ordnance Survey map reference SY 331 930*) and with the help of his new found fortune, converted it into a coaching inn, where in honour of his fortuitous companion named it '*The Black Dog*.' The coaching inn was eventually pulled down in 1916 and a new inn, retaining *The Black Dog* name built in its place. This still remains at Uplyme, though when we visited in 1998, it had changed from a public house to a modern

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Taken in 1912, The Black Dog Inn, Uplyme, Devon.

guesthouse now called *'The Old Black Dog'* just within the Devon border.

But the story does not end there, for when the dog ceased its haunting of the farmhouse, it took to haunting, at midnight the lane adjacent to the inn known as *'Haye Lane,'* alias *'Dog Lane.'*

Late one evening in 1856, a lady nurse who was well aware of the black dog legend was walking back to Lyme Regis via Dog Lane accompanied by her husband, when they were met halfway by what appeared to be an animal the size of an average dog. The woman turned to her husband.

"What's that?" She asked.

"What?" He replied, *"I see nothing."*

The creature drew closer, to within two or three yards away.

The woman who was now absolutely terrified, described the dark animal, as: *'a black shaggy dog about the size of a large calf.'*

The air around them suddenly froze as the dog passed, and as the woman turned to look back at the creature, she noticed that it was continually growing in size until it was as high as the trees, then it swelled into a large cloud and disappeared. After this terrifying encounter she turned to her husband to look at his watch. — It was five minutes after midnight!

The last reported sighting of the black dog of Lyme was in 1959, when a family saw it on holiday after visiting The Black Dog Inn. The three tourists were walking down Dog Lane when it came floating out from a hedge and crossed to the other side.



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Extracts taken from **Dark Dorset:
Tales Of Mystery, Wonder and
Terror** by Robert. J. Newland and
Mark. J. North, available Spring
2002, priced at £12.99.

Dark Dorset

Tales Of Mystery, Wonder and Terror



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My Sighting Of An Exotic Cat

**Capstone Country Park,
Friday 26.10.01**

By Neil Arnold

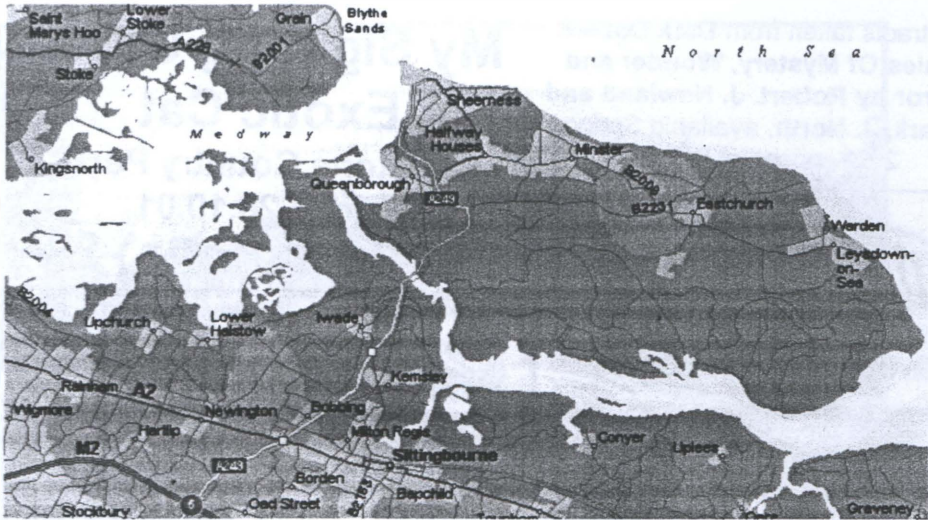
On Friday 26th October 2001 myself and my girlfriend Nicola were travelling to work. My girlfriend works in Strood but every morning usually takes me to work first at Gillingham. We had come from the direction of Princes Park, Chatham and at around 8:15 am were travelling along Capstone Road, adjacent to Luton Wreck playing fields.

It was a slightly overcast Autumn day. We approached a round-a-bout near the Waggon At Hale Public House. There is often a lot of traffic during the week, as many cars are full of school children who usually turn left at the round-a-bout and ascend the hill to their school. We turned right at the round-a-bout. From here we usually go left along Ash Tree Lane or there is another country road, an extension of Capstone Road which runs passed the actual Capstone Country Park.

As we reached the pub I looked up into the sloping field on the right as I always have done considering that the past had brought a number of exotic cat sightings within the area. The fields were mere soil, whilst the undergrowth surrounding them still green but browning with Autumn's presence. Upon looking to my right past Nicola I noticed something at the top of the field. It was almost camouflaged just by the earth but its slight movement caught my eye. Although we were not travelling at speed it was difficult to just stop. However, I asked Nicola, "What the bloody Hell is that ?". Although driving, Nicola glanced quickly to the field. The animal in question seemed to be sitting in the field, we knew it was unusual because it was too big to be a domestic cat and did not have the colouring or characteristics of a fox.

Instead of turning right I told Nicola to go around the next roundabout so that we could take another look. Although a Parcel Force van nearly cut us up, we could once again throw another glance at this animal. It was

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now on my left and although I had just seconds to view it I am 100% positive that it was not a creature native to this country and it was some sort of cat. As we drove past the field again I looked up. The animal was sat on its haunches, occasionally it seemed to groom itself and then stared in our direction although it was quite a distance away. Of course, the fact that there were many cars that morning may well have held an interest for it because it was a safe distance away, some two-hundred yards at a rough guess. I kept saying to Nicki, "It's not a fox but I don't know what it is, what do you think?"

Saying this felt bizarre. I have researched sightings of exotic cats in my county since I was sixteen after general interest in cryptozoology. I have interviewed hundreds of eye-witnesses, examined evidence and studied zoological records, spoken to animal trappers and zoologists in order to make my research adequate instead of amateurish like so many so-called exotic cat researchers. And yet the strange thing was, I could not pin-point a species. In seconds I was on my way to a boring job, leaving behind an exciting event. In the excitement I phoned and woke up my father who had, earlier in the year, spotted a similar sort of cat in the

same area. I also spoke with my girlfriend to get her thoughts on the animal. It was definitely a cat of some sort, slightly larger than a fox and the colour of a rabbit. It was not sandy-coloured, marked or black. I could not see a tail although the animal seemed to have a slim head and pointed ears which seemed slightly darker than the body colour. As it sat there I estimate that the height was around eighteen inches.

When my father spotted a similar sort of cat near the local rubbish tip, he said that he was unsure of the species but thought it was a small species of lynx. At first he thought it was a hare but it was too feline. He did not see a tail but as the animal sped off at great speed it then stopped near woodland and sat there watching. This animal has a small territory which enables it to feed off mice, rabbits, lizards, birds and insects. If I had to put money on a species then I would go for lynx or caracal, but only a clearer sighting can fully identify this out of place but comfortable creature.

BLACK LEOPARD SHOT ON ISLE OF SHEPPEY

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On the same day I saw the Caracal I received a phone call at my workplace from the Sheerness Times who told me that a Black Leopard had allegedly been shot on the island on Saturday 20th October at around 11:30 am. Originally I was dubious to the report but surprised that the witness to the event had given all of his details to the newspaper. And so, when I got home I phoned him for a lengthy interview with the hope that the sickly feeling I had in my stomach would be washed away.

The witness in question was genuine. A Black Leopard just over three-feet in length had been blasted by a 'farmer' on a pheasant shoot. This was an animal I had tracked for two years, often believing it had been one of the 'beasts' of Blue Bell Hill which, as part of its territory, had moved through Sittingbourne and crossed the bridge onto the island, possibly after following the railway.

The witness, a 30-year old male was building a wall at Leysdowne with various other builders and some 150 yards away they were watching 'beaters', young gentlemen who walk through the marshes to spook the pheasants. The witness explained to his work mates what was going on as he, at the age of sixteen, had also been a beater.

The witness told me:

"I noticed 12 to 14 of these shooters walking down the side of the field and I was explaining to the blokes that the youngsters with them were beaters flattening the corn to scare the pheasants so they would fly into the air for the men to shoot."

He then described what I did not want to hear.

"One of the dogs, a Black Labrador, was picking up a pheasant that had been shot when I saw a large black cat, about three foot in length coming out of the rough ground. It headed towards the dog and there seemed to be a tussle between them. The next thing I new one of the men had shot the cat dead from twenty yards away. This was no ordinary domestic cat though because after he nudged it with his foot he picked it up halfway down its tail and the body was the length of the man's leg and the head was dragging on the ground."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. He continued:

"It caused quite a lot of commotion because these shooters are not meant to fire at ground level in case they hit a dog or young beater. The others gathered round the shooter to see what he had shot and then he walked off with the body. I am an ex-serviceman who has served in the Gulf and Bosnia wars, I've seen some sights in my time but nothing like this. It left me speechless."

I spoke with the witness for over an hour and am convinced that something unusual was shot that day. The land owner was contacted by the Sheerness Times but said that he saw nothing that day.

News of the incident spread like wildfire, hitting the Forrean Times Message Board in days, but much confusion came about.

I have researched sightings and evidence of exotic cats across Kent for more than nine years and I always thought that if there was any truth to the Isle Of Sheppey sightings, which seemed to take place within a year or so, then there was always the chance that the animal would be shot. Despite being so elusive a Black Leopard would always be prone to the bullet considering the amount of shooting on the island and the relative flatness of the terrain. I believe that such an incident needed attention simply with the hope that those responsible would at least feel guilt or come up with the carcass. However, that was probably burnt within hours.

The worse thing about the whole incident is the fact that it almost brought the end of an era...but only if the animal that was shot was the Blue Bell Hill feline.

This may well have been the same animal I had seen during March 2000.

I believe something unusual happened that day also for the reason that the witness had no idea how big a leopard was. He at first did not think it was a Black Panther because he thought such an animal was lion-size. However, when I mentioned that the animal seen on the island was only about three-and-a-half feet long, he seemed quite saddened.

Whilst many farmers and the like may well be irritated by the existence of exotic cat's within the country, I believe that anyone who kills such an animal should be prosecuted. Something must be arranged before these animals are native to Britain because if one is wounded it will become more dangerous...but only through the fault of man.

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Big Cats on The Isle of Sheppey

by Neil Arnold

EDITOR'S NOTE: Neil sent us this article a year or so ago, and although we were keeping it for our forthcoming big cat special we decided that in view of the events noted in the previous article it made sense to print it here...

The Isle of Sheppey is sixty-square miles of nothing. A cold, desolate moorland landscape where freezing winds bite even the most hardened face. No woodland grows on this harsh terrain, merely stark, naked trees dot about the ravaged marshland. Life exists in the built up residential areas of Minster, Queenborough and Sheerness, whilst entertainment is provided by the dated coastal shambles known as Leysdowne.

On the sea wall foreign scorpions creep amongst the seaweed and amongst the shore scrubland a variety of bird-life attracts the most avid watcher. The grim flatness of Eastchurch, Harty and Elmley is depressing to the watery eye - oceans of dry brush whistled by the roaring gales.

Foxes on the island are rare, whilst Pheasants and rabbits are in abundance, often scattered like still, fat Furbys. Run-of-the-mill wildlife such as blackbirds are more obese here than anywhere else. Pigging out on worms whilst in turn ravens and crows leer from pylons like evil scavengers.

The island is a raw, inhospitable world. It is a bitter place of farms and hedge-lined fields. The ground is

rigid and bumpy. Thorny bushes tear the clothes of any out of place Rambler, and in these scrawny trees hang morbid bird skeletons, draped like some sort of eerie decoration. In fact, any wayward, wandering Rambler in these parts is more likely to stumble across an escaped convict rather than an elusive predator. In either case, the island offers no way in or escape route. Eastchurch prison is a high security establishment for prisoners serving the end of long sentences and for those serving short sentences. Any convict with second thoughts about seeing out their time will be met by the ominous sight of Kingsferry Bridge, a concrete guardian only raised for boats on the River Swale and in the event of an errant prisoner.

Strong currents and boggy shoreline alienate the island from the surrounding towns of Sittingbourne, Grain and Cliffe. These dense, overgrown areas are inhabited by strange, large exotic felines. Through the winding lanes and thorny thickets, reports have come of panther-like cats and fawny-coloured mystery animals. However, it is the eye-witness reports from the bleak island which interest me most. This secluded, windswept flatland seems to be populated by wild cats which should, despite their elusiveness, stick out like sore thumbs against the frosted landscape.

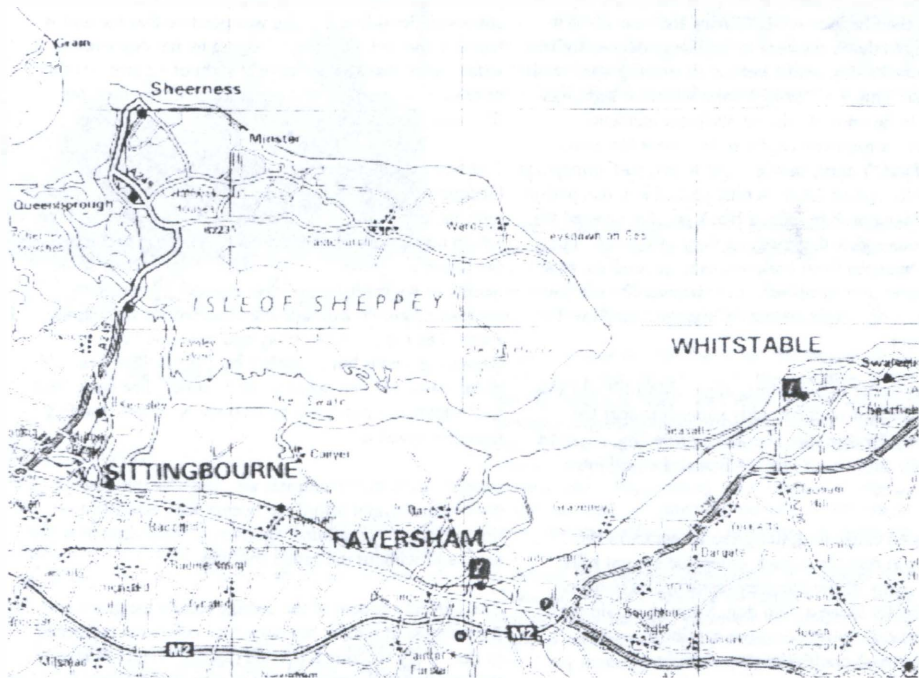
Sightings from the island in the past have been inconsistent and certainly few and far between. From such vague details I concluded that on a rare occasion, one mystery predator may have crossed the busy bridge, unseen in the twilight hours. Such a cat would have made its way from Sittingbourne.

Recently the Isle Of Sheppey has been caught up in big cat fever as more and more unsuspecting witnesses have stumbled across these exotics. The flaps have been consistent, causing the island's residents to bombard the local newspaper, (Sheerness Times) with calls and to talk among themselves so frantically, as if they were discussing last night's episode of *Eastenders*.

Through the murky gloom of a permanent Winter, sheep wallow in dreary water-holes as miserable mists hide the pale sun. This ravaged, watered picture is a world away from the towns which are like any other. However, the everyday commotion has not prevented a ruthless predator from stealing pets and terrifying people.

Margaret Parish, an elderly lady from Minster had, for the past five years tended to her pet duck Daisy on a daily basis. One cold December lunch-time Daisy had

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gone missing. Daisy was so big that she couldn't even fly and so whatever had wandered into the back garden and taken the duck, without trace, had enough strength to pick her up and make a quick exit. Days later a few feathers were found at a wooded area called The Glen which overlooks the Thames Estuary. From here on, the island would never be the same and so began a serious spate of unusual sightings and animal kills.

About town, at Queenborough, an elderly lady at Barler Place named Erika Rowlands spotted a black panther on a nearby garage roof. It was very late at night as Erika waited for the rumble of the last train to come along the line which her bedroom overlooks. She got the fright of her life when she saw the big cat perched only twelve feet away. After a short while the cat leapt to the ground and vanished into the darkness, however it soon returned and made for the neighbours patio.

Only days before the Queenborough sighting, fourteen ducks were slaughtered in a garden at Southsea Avenue, Minster Paul Gilchrist, 66, discovered thirteen decapitated birds and one with serious other injuries. The enclosure which surrounds the birds is over six-feet high, meaning that whatever attacked these ducks must have been agile and silent.

At the other end of the island at Leysdowne, there was a brief glimpse of an unusually large black feline, said to look leopard-like in form. The vague sighting was backed up by a serious attack on a swan at Little Groves Farm at the same area. Nick Love owns the farm and believes the death of his bird was a "mysterious circumstance". Love discovered a pile of feathers bereft of any type of corpse or blood and ruled out interference by foxes.

Whilst animals have been left stripped and powerfully devoured, the elusive assassin finally began to catch the eye of those desperate to find out just what type of killer was roaming the cold wastes and at times, the crowded towns. Inspector Gareth Silcock of Swale Police

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expressed much concern at the possibility of a big cat loose in the Sheppey wilds. During the year 2000 it was alleged that a mysterious and large dark-coloured cat attacked a dog whilst out for an evening stroll with its owner. This was during a time when cat sightings seemed to be one-off, almost mythical incidents.

However, a highway engineer for Swale Council, named Pat O'Leary, saw a huge, wild cat at 4:45pm during November 2000. Whilst parked at a bus pull-in on the Eastchurch by-pass a black panther crossed the road about eighty feet away in front of the car. The animal emerged from undergrowth, crossed the road and hopped into shrubbery. The cat was described as four-foot long, eighteen inches high and very low to the ground.

Only days after this sighting, angler Martin Field was digging for bait on the muddy shore-line near the Kingsferry Bridge when he was alarmed by, "... *an extremely large wild cat*", which rushed off into undergrowth.

There is no cause to doubt these witnesses or the evidence in regards to such gruesome animal kills. Indeed, many of the Sheppey residence have never seen a fox let alone a wild dog. Sceptics would argue otherwise and search for more credibility in the witnesses. And credibility they shall have. . .

Geraldine, the islands emergency doctor was on call as usual during the month of January 2001. It was into the early hours as the bright full moon illuminated the trees and hedge-rows on the Lower road from Leysdowne to Eastchurch. Speeding through the twilight and dodging the rabbits. . . and sometimes not, has always been Geraldine's occupational hazard. On this occasion, on the 8th, something caught her eye amongst the blur of the trees flying by. She was with her fellow locum doctor when they approached the Eastchurch turn-off and they were both stunned to see a large, golden coloured cat in the hedge-row. The animal was not at all flustered by the speed of the approaching car. Its rear end protruded from the shrubbery and powerful hind legs balanced in the thicket. Despite driving at speed, Geraldine and her workmate could distinguish certain features of this wonderful animal. The animal was eighteen inches or so high, its tail was long and straight and the coat was thick, patchy and almost muddy looking. Geraldine estimated that the animal would have been around four-feet in length if in full view.

'Tricks of the light and creeping shadows may have confused Geraldine, but she was positive that the animal she saw was not a panther. Judging by her descriptions it would seem that she had caught sight of a puma. At this time such a report did not match up with my files, but that was soon to change.

Just beyond the mammoth Kingsferry bridge on the Queenborough road sits Neats Court Cottages. A proud looking home with iron gates and a marshy back garden which outstretches a football field. Attached to the side of the house is a rather ominous sight. A large cage some twenty or so feet long sits like some backwoods tatty enclosure, strewn with branches and fenced with strong mesh. The cage is now empty and shadowed by strangling weeds but fourteen years ago a three year-old puma named Kitten lazed in the confines. The tame feline was apparently put down by its owners, despite the fact that they loved it.

Indeed, many exotic animals are allegedly put down if the owners cannot afford the license fees, but this does not explain the continued sightings of such animals in the area. and without the cage confines.

The current resident of the cottage recalls the grace and friendliness of Kitten, but does not know what happened to her. Only recently a pet hen (named Ginger Rogers) that roosted in the trees in a cage was found decapitated on the ground. The carcass was bereft of blood or any type of gore and the bite had been clean and efficient. Although the owner is not sure whether a big cat killed the hen, it would seem as though there is a bizarre connection between various beheadings on the island. Could such kills be put down to Kitten or some other large cat ?

During the year 1992 a puma was spotted sitting on the roof of the Sheerness Old Dairy on New Road. The animal was seen by a friend of the owner of Neats Court Cottages, but only as recently as 2000 spoke of the incident for fear of ridicule. Maybe just one elusive puma stalks the small-holdings on the Isle Of Sheppey. Witnesses to nocturnal sightings may well be seeing brown cats which appear black under the night sky. If this is the case then what could explain the next sighting, which occurred in broad daylight ?

Chris Boakes of Eastchurch works as a warden at the prison on the island. Chris tends to the sheep in the nearby fields and usually takes inmates with him in his Landrover.

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One early evening during September 2000 he was with an in-mate driving up Jenkins Hill. About one hundred yards away they both saw a large, dark-coloured cat cross the road and disappear into the hedge. Four months later at the beginning of 2001, at 10.00am, Chris was with two in-mates checking on the sheep.

They drove up a bumpy track and one inmate saw a large animal in a coppice only thirty-feet away. Chris proceeded to reverse the van to a halt and then watch a 'young' black panther squatting in the undergrowth. The animal then casually got up and mooched off into the bushes without fear.

Chris' sighting was backed up by the in-mates who all described the animal as slightly smaller than a labrador dog but with a long, hooked tail.

It seems clear that a black leopard also prowls the remote marshes of this fog-swamped terrain. Another sighting goes back to the mid-'90s when a black feline, the size of an Alsatian was seen at Warden Bay.

Meanwhile, sightings have not been confined to the more common of the mystery cats. Gary Oxiand of Strood was on the island at 7 o'clock one November morning during 1998, driving on a road through marshland, when he spotted a lynx-like cat standing in the grass. Although adamant as to what he saw, further questioning seemed to point more towards a puma.

I have spent many years collating reports of big cats in Kent and tracked such animals throughout the county. Eyewitness reports are often as important as evidence such as paw-prints.

Too many so-called Big Cat Groups advertise their research and attempt to take on a nationwide phenomenon. And to many of those within such groups are armchair enthusiasts.

The Isle Of Sheppey proves that big cats are more elusive than we think. At least five large, exotic cats roam Kent but this is within wooded terrain. Sheppey is almost lifeless to look at and mundanely open. If a large, black leopard can remain unseen for so long, and only occasionally cause a spate of sightings then we must ask ourselves how long these animals have been there.

Let's face it, pre-1976 when many animals were kept without license, no-one was actually out there investigating sightings. Since such Acts have been passed, sightings of big cats have become all the more interesting but obvious due to uncaring owners unleashing such beasts. Whilst such animals such as panther and puma have such vast territory, it would seem that at the moment such cats are in abundance. It is as if such animals have only existed since the early '80s.

However, is there a remote possibility that such elusive felines could well have inhabited Kent and country for hundreds of years. The fact that we as humans are more aware of such animals only enables us to see more than we would normally. Once you are alerted to some mysterious presence, the more you look afield with areas such as Sheppey acting as almost impossible hunting ground, we really must begin to give credit to these elusive cats.

In Issue 22 of "Animals & Men" Martin Jenkins stated that, "Neil Arnold's account of his search for the beast of Blue Bell Hill must make a countryman's heart sink."

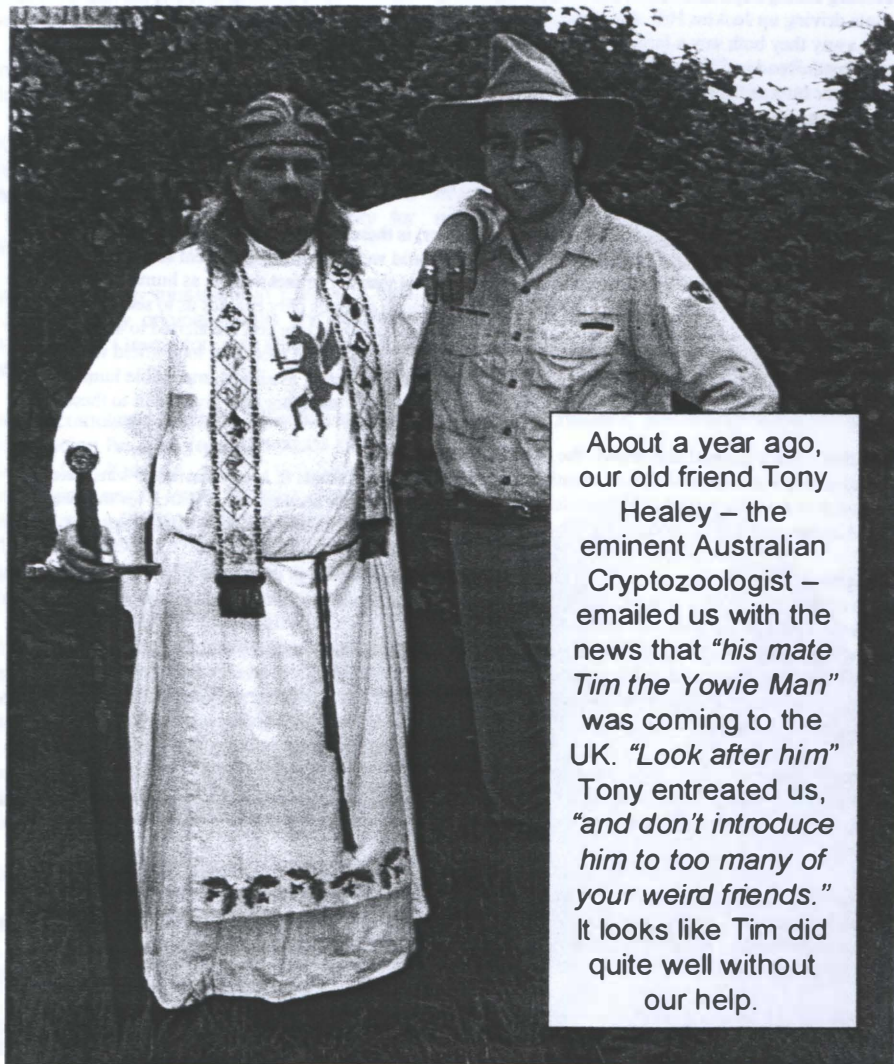
This is complete rubbish in view of all the trust I've built with farmers, wardens, gamekeepers and countryman in order to track such animals. Indeed, I have researched many cases with their help. What makes my heart sink is to here such waffling from an armchair enthusiast as so many fortunes are. Whilst most of us start as urban amateurs there does indeed come a time when we become better trackers.

We must learn, if we are to comment and research, and yes, we must act like the creature we are hunting.

Whilst we are not capturing big cats on film everyday, we are still receiving so much information and reports which make a naturally elusive animal not so elusive.

Some of us, believe it or not, are on the right track of these cats but we are also in danger of pulling the plug on their existence by exposing their habitats, simply so we can then call ourselves professional trackers. The Isle Of Sheppey is not greatly populated by humans. People inhabit the right areas, being the towns. And the monsters stay in the closet, or in the case of the Sheppey big cats. . . in the hedgerows. Where they belong.

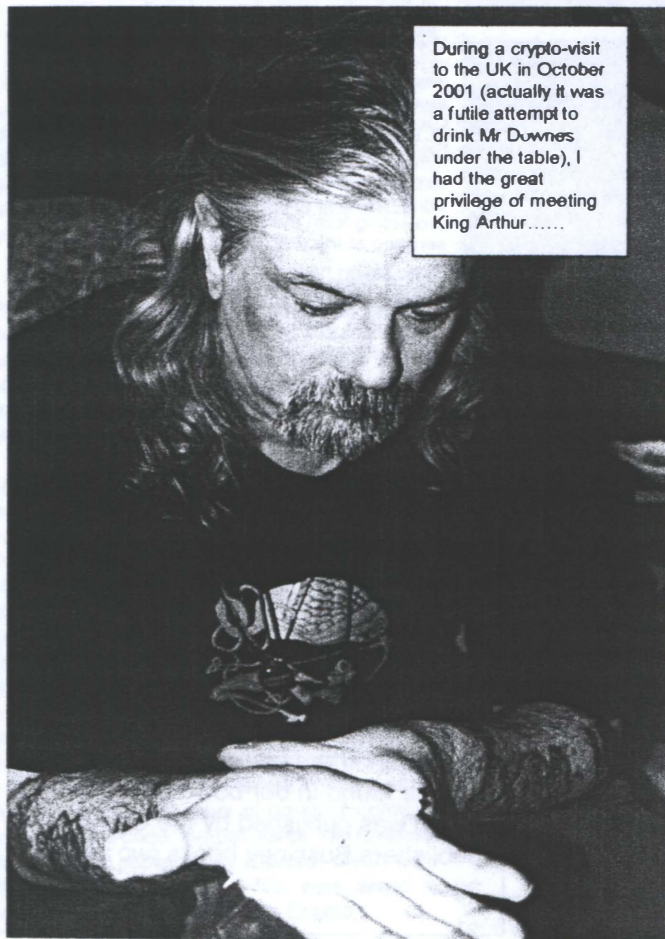
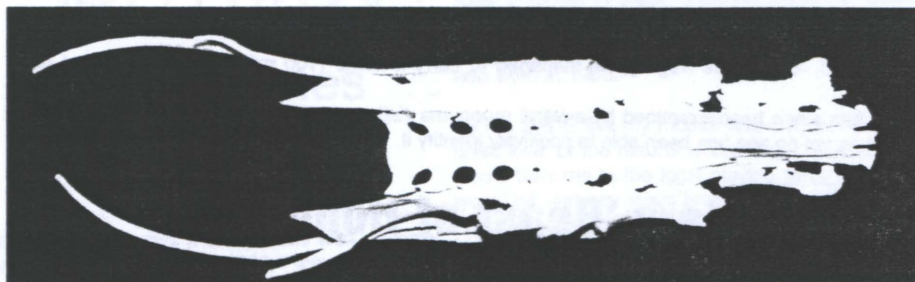
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About a year ago, our old friend Tony Healey – the eminent Australian Cryptozoologist – emailed us with the news that *“his mate Tim the Yowie Man”* was coming to the UK. *“Look after him”* Tony entreated us, *“and don’t introduce him to too many of your weird friends.”* It looks like Tim did quite well without our help.

The Peculiar Tale of Tim the Yowie Man, King Arthur and the Dragon Skull

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During a crypto-visit to the UK in October 2001 (actually it was a futile attempt to drink Mr Downes under the table), I had the great privilege of meeting King Arthur.....

King Arthur Pendragon, is a Pagan Priest, and a Druid Swordbearer, and takes, (as do his Knights, followers and Priestess's) his and their duties seriously.

This means that he has an unshakeable belief in the Divine, and his/and their place in this system. Thus it may be observed that he is at one King Arthur and Pendragon. What is best for the nation (Pendragon) must come first. What is best for the tribe (King) must come second and what is best for the man (Arthur) must come last.

While discussing the world of crypto-zoology in the King's Aldershot Castle (or should I say council flat), he produced a most unusual skull. I hadn't seen anything like it before in my life.

'No one knows what it is, so I call it a dragon skull,' declared the King who is current custodian of the unidentified skeleton.

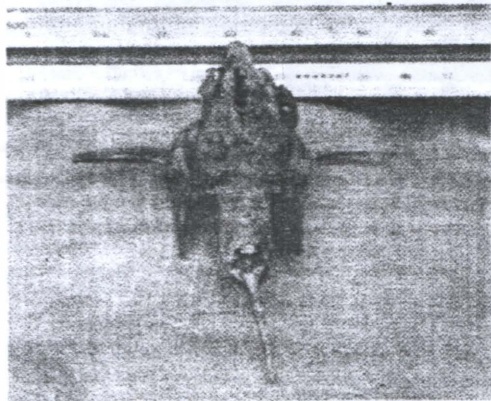
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The 'Dragons Skull' was discovered by the son of the King's lovely assistant Carrie De Fey. 'My son found the Dragons Skull on Chesil Beech in Dorset in 1996,' she told me.

Carrie recalled, 'despite its fragility, he managed to carry it home (100 miles) in the pocket of his jeans.'

The skull has since been examined by several museums (although she was unable to recall which ones) and as yet no one has been able to positively identify it.

The legendary 'Beast of Holderness?'



The skeleton in the photograph was found in a plant pot in Patrington, and the intrigued householder contacted the Gazette to find out if any of our readers could identify it.

The plant pot was on top of a wall, so it seems logical to assume that the remains were dropped by a passing bird. The skeleton is around 5cm long and 5cm wide in total. Gazette staff - with their wide-ranging knowledge of anatomy - have been unable to determine which end is which, but what we believe to be the tail is one long bone, and is articulated where it joins the body. The two bones projecting from the body at right angles are serrated at the rear, giving a saw-tooth effect.

Speculation has ranged from an ex-bat to a defunct tortoise, but it is probably a wee bit on the small side to be the legendary 'Beast of Holderness'.

BUT THERE'S MORE.....

Proving, (as if any proof were needed), that the fortean universe is a very strange thing comes another bizarre skull. This time from Holdemesse in East Yorkshire.

Animals & Men subscriber Chris Parker of Hornsea sent us the above press cutting with a note suggesting that he believes it to probably be a fish bone of some description.

We think that he is probably right, but unfortunately the picture quality in the cutting from *The Holdemesse Gazette* of 8th February 2002 is so dodgy that it is difficult to make any firm judgements. We will just have to wait and see what transpires.

Unfortunately, at the moment we have no idea what either of the skulls actually are although we would hazard a guess in both instances that they are piscine rather than draconian in nature. The *Dragon Skull* belonging to 'King Arthur' looks remarkably like the skull of some kind of sea horse or pipe fish to us, and we await the judgement of the *Animals & Men* readership with great interest. (For those interested in such things the tale of another bizarrely fortean pipefish can be found in our book *Weird Devon* which was published by the Cornish publishers Bossiney books two years ago.

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This is an excellent band, and furthermore a truly fortan one. If there is any justice in the universe, or at least in the music industry they should be absolutely massive, but as there isn't any justice at all (if there was, people would actually have bought some of the *Amphibians from Outer Space* albums) they will probably sink without trace. Sad but true. We urge you to buy the CD in an attempt to stop this happening!

As regular readers of this magazine will know, we take a keen interest in cultural references to things cryptozoological. When we were first told of an American indie/punk band who had written a song about Mothman, therefore, we were both pleased and intrigued. When the CD by a band called *Pet the Pig* arrived on our doormat and turned out to be rather good that was even better.

They sound like a mixture of REM and XTC and have a hearty endorsement from both Jon and Richard.

Their first CD, "Mothman And Other Twisted Tales", which features no less than 14 songs, and includes the instant classic, "Mothman", and the holiday masterpiece(?), "Mothman Christmas", in which the Mothman lends dear old St. Nick a helping hand.

The members of Pet The Pig! (Oink Grunt, and Squeal) play a variety of musical instruments and often become quite confused and disoriented when asked "who plays what?"



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INTERVIEW:

Col. John Blashford Snell



After the death of *The Father of Cryptozoology* last year we decided that no-one could replace Professor Bernard Heuvelmans as our Honorary Consulting Editor. We decided instead to create a new position; Honorary Life President of the Centre for Fortean Zoology. The successful candidate was selected unanimously from a shortlist of one!

Colonel John Blashford-Snell is the living epitome of the English Gentleman explorer – somewhere between Biggles

and Indiana Jones and he is what everyone else in the CFZ Faculty aspires to be. We are very honoured that he agreed to become our Life President. A few weeks later he gave an extensive interview to **RICHARD FREEMAN**:

FREEMAN: How did you first get bitten by the exploration bug?

BLASHFORD-SNELL: My father was in the Church and he was also an Army Chaplain. He and my Mother were very adventurous people – they were virtually missionaries in the Pacific and New Zealand. My Mother was English and my Father was from Jersey and they went out – just after they were married – to New Zealand and set up a little parish in South Island. They formed the Scouts and Guides in that part of New Zealand and they took their young charges into the wilds of Fjordland which in those days were largely unexplored. So there's some of that in my blood.

I obviously followed his footsteps in a Military career. I went straight into the army from school. I had been at school in Jersey where I had done quite a lot of underwater diving which in those days was in its infancy. There was no such thing as the British Sub Aqua Club – I was involved with a little local club in Jersey which was the first in the country and that's part of me going to a new frontier.

When I got into the Royal Engineers from Sandhurst that was positively ideal because they were the Army's explorers! You were positively encouraged to go and look at strange places where few people had trod as long as you took some of your soldiers with you and it was good training for them. Because our job in war and peace is the same – it's conquering obstacles: building bridges or roads or railways or crossing mountains.

Later when I was out in Cyprus our squadron was given the task of clearing mines in North Africa. We then began to take Oil Companies who were exploring for oil deep into the Sahara. I learned a lot from the scientists who were working with them because although they were looking for oil they were also interested in Archaeology, and Zoology and

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Biology and so on. Our job was to get them through the mine fields and get them back alive.

Then I had a break! I was supposed to go back to Sandhurst as an instructor. I marched into the Commandant's Office – a Churchillian figure – wonderful man called General Sir John Mogg. He had been brought up as a backwoods boy in Canada and born in a lumber camp. He said to me *"Your job is simple – you are the Adventure Training Officer"*. He continued *"your job is simple – you've got to get as many of these little blighters overseas for the benefit of their character and to the least possible detriment to the Empire."* That was it.

I then had to take the cadets out on non military tasks. We were looking for bugs, beetles, snakes, community aid, zoology, biology, archaeology. Of course most of this was paid for by the Army, and the idea of Adventure Training has gone on to this day, and is now very much a part of service life. From there we launched one expedition after another until we got to a really big one which was up the Blue Nile in 1968. This became a sort of national expedition really, and we succeeded and came back.

We'd always had some difficulties with the funding because we weren't a charity – it was all part of the Army – so the General said, *"well you'd better set up a charity because what you're doing is charitable"* so we set up the Scientific Exploration Society in 1969 and I became Chairman. I'm still the Chairman because I can't find anyone to take it on <laughs>

FREEMAN: Can you tell us how Operation Drake and Operation Raleigh were set up?

BLASHFORD-SNELL: The SAS mounted one expedition after another. The Blue Nile led to our foundation. Then came the Darien Gap which was another huge one, and that led to the Zaire River. On the Zaire River we were approached by a PR company based in Jersey that wanted to mark the 75th Anniversary of the Royal Trust Company of Canada who were one of their clients. They wanted to send seventy five birthday cakes to seventy five poor people on Jersey, but they couldn't find seventy five poor people on

Jersey so they decided instead to send some young people from the island on an expedition. They rung me to ask whether I would take a young man from the island on the forthcoming Zaire River Expedition.

I was a bit hesitant because it was a man-sized project, but we agreed that if we could have a selection test then we would do it. So we set up a Selection Committee in Jersey and advertised for young people between the ages of 17 and 22 who were fit, compatible, could speak English and could swim. We were, of course, swamped with youngsters who wanted to go. We had the selection and two boys came out very close to the top and were almost equal. And I said that it was a hell of a shame when these two youngsters are so good that we can only take one. Well, one of them happened to be a Police Cadet, so I went to see the Chief Constable, who I knew and asked whether there was any chance of getting a sponsor for this second boy.

He said that *"Friday nights are a good night for sponsors"* <laughs> *"I'll get you a sponsor"*. So we had two young men from Jersey with us on the expedition and later on we had a young man from America, and it was such a huge success that when they came back all of these three young men came back to their respective areas of work and school and generally speaking inspired other young people with the same pioneering spirit that they had.

One of the officers who had been on the expedition was the Equerry to the Prince of Wales. He and another friend of his had been telling the Prince about what we had been doing one night, and apparently the Prince thought that it was a marvellous idea and said *"will you get John Blashford-Snell to come up and see me?"*

I whistled up to Buckingham Palace and he said *"Dammit, if you can do this with two or three youngsters why can't you do it with two or three hundred?"* I looked a bit surprised but he said, *"Well, we've got all the young people in the Inner Cities in Britain, and they are in desperate trouble, and they lack leadership and they are getting into trouble with the police – if we set up some kind of adventure then a whole lot of them can become leaders"*.

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That was the start of Operation Drake, and of course the Prince became patron, and by the time we were half way around the world and we didn't know whether we would get back in credit or not he rang up and said "well, you can't stop here, you must do it again," and that was the start of Operation Raleigh.

That in a nutshell is the story.

FREEMAN: Could you tell us a little about the giant lizards that you discovered in New Guinea?

BLASHFORD-SNELL: It was during Operation Drake that the local government in Papua New-Guinea asked us for our help because there was a local story that they didn't really believe about a dragon-like creature in the south west of the island that was attacking people and causing mayhem, and what they really wanted us to do was to lay the story to rest so that they could tell the people that it wasn't a dragon after all but just their imaginations.

So I went down with a party of twenty youngsters and a biologist called Ian Redmond. The government provided us with a boat to go down and investigate and there were certainly stories about this creature that they called Artrellia. We went to the local hospital on an island called Daru and asked them about it. They showed us the hospital records which included an account of a man who had been attacked and killed by one of these creatures. The description of the wounds was pretty horrific. It was as if a tiger had gone for him.

We went into the jungle. I have to say that we were armed and had image intensifiers and radios and so on, and we *did* find tracks of what appeared to be a large lizard, and from these tracks it appeared that it was possible for this thing to walk upright, but it had a long tail because you could see the tracks in the ground.

We had a film crew with us and we must have spent a fortnight combing this very thick bamboo jungle and swampland and the trouble was that to move quietly was almost impossible. It was extremely hot and although we had the local

trackers and we saw lots of smaller lizards, we didn't see any giant ones.

Then, one day, I went to church and we only had about a week left in the area. After church we went out and while we were talking to the vicar I asked "what do you think of this story of the giant lizards?" The vicar said "Yes Artrellia does exist. I've seen them. You chaps will never see them because you go thundering through the jungle and make too much noise".

"You need good hunters" he said. I asked him whether he knew of any good hunters and he said "Oh yes, my choir". I asked him how much it would cost to hire the choir. He said "well, I need a new church roof" (it was only thatch), so I gave him, I don't know, the equivalent of about \$15 and he said "and I want some cartridges for my shotgun" so I gave him cartridges for his shotgun and it was like Friday afternoon on the M25 and the whole choir and the vicar rushed off out into the jungle.

Meanwhile we set off to a different area and again there were lots of people who described this thing. Some said that it was twenty feet, some that it was sixteen feet, and it did appear to be a very large creature.

We then got a message from the vicar saying that he had captured one alive. We rushed back to the first village and as we arrived the hunters were coming back, and they'd got this thing tied to a pole. It had been shot, but it wasn't dead, and it was about six foot long. It had enormously sharp claws – quite out of proportion to the rest of its body – and razor sharp teeth and a very square head quite unlike the pointy head of all the other monitors we had seen.

Ian Redmond examined it and decided that it was so badly injured that all we could do was to take it outside and put it out of its agony. He injected it with Nembutal and put it to sleep. And then we were able to examine it and we found that it was a baby, and we realised that there was some truth in the creature attaining an enormous size.

Ian deduced that it was actually a creature called Salvatori's Monitor which is a very rare one. It is not as heavy as a Komodo Dragon with its thick tail –

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the tail is very thin – but it is extremely massive. We then went on searching the area trying to find evidence of these bigger ones. The dead one was pickled and taken back to the government. The film crew was actually lying out at night by a water hole where they had laid out the carcass of a deer. I'll never forget what the cameraman said:

"Although I was half asleep, as the light began to grow I suddenly realised that there was something on the far side of the water hole about twenty yards away, watching me from above a log. As the light grew I realised that this thing had a head the size of that of a horse. Of course, the light was totally insufficient to be able to take a photograph, but then it raised one claw over the log and I thought that it was going to come towards me, and so I moved to get the focus ready in position, but as soon as it saw me whooosh it was gone and all that was left were the tracks"

From his description we reckoned that it was the same species but that he had seen a very much larger specimen, probably in the region of sixteen feet or so. We went back and explained to the people that this thing wasn't a devil but that it was just a type of monitor lizard – albeit a very large one.

The government was very pleased, but we did hear lots of stories about these things walking upright. The people believed that it could breathe fire, and we realised that this was on account of the yellow mouth and the pink tongue flashing in and out like a flame. But they did walk upright for short distances, like most of the monitor lizards, you could see them rear up on their hind legs to peer over the grass before they would scuttle away.

FREEMAN: Is there any place that you want to go that you have never been and any creature you want to see that you have never seen?

BLASHFORD-SNELL: There are plenty of places that I've never been. For example, I've never been to South Africa though I am going at the end of March, and I have only spent a few days in Siberia and I don't know the country there

at all well. I think that the Siberian Tiger is an animal that I WOULD want to see.

There are always stories that you want to follow up. For example, there are stories of humanoids wherever you go in the world. They have always intrigued me, and although I don't necessarily believe in the existence of the yeti, there must be something because the same sort of stories crop up with very similar descriptions whether it be in China, or Mongolia or North America. It is most peculiar that all these primitive peoples with few or no communications should be describing the same animal – if indeed it is an animal.

When I was in Mongolia there were numerous sightings there by people who didn't seem particularly excited about it. I showed them pictures and things and they just said: *"It's only a wild man, it's nothing unusual"*. It is one thing that has intrigued me, to find out whether these things exist and whether they are human or whether they are animal. There are lots of pictures of tracks and things of what is supposed to be the abominable snowman but quite frankly until someone produces one no-one is going to believe them.

In part two of this interview, next issue, Richard learns the bizarre story of the duck eating perch and hears about mammoths, giant snakes and more mysterious humanoids.

RICHARD FREEMAN: In 1960 a village in Papua New Guinea was attacked by several dragons, some seven metres in length. The dragons reared up and walked on their hind legs. Some said they breathed fire and drunk the blood of their victims.

They clawed and bit their victims to death, ate some and left others to rot. The villagers were so afraid they built a stockade around their homes. An official government investigation found that the victims had foot-long slashes from the dragon's claws. A bounty was put on the monsters but was never claimed. The dragons disappeared back into the jungle.

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Banned from The Roxy

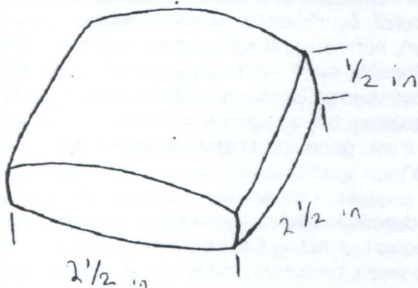


LETTERS TO YER EDITOR

The Editor and his band of merry men welcome an exchange of correspondence on any subject of interest to readers of this magazine. We reserve the right to edit letters and would like to stress that opinions voiced are those of the individual correspondent rather than being necessarily those of the editorial team or the Centre for Fortean Zoology. Every attempt is made not to infringe anyone's moral rights or copyright, and we apologise if we have unwittingly done so.

Jon,

When I was about 6 years old I saw an animal... or something that I have yet to identify. My parents and I were vacationing in Florida. Since I'm the only one in my family that even likes the water we only spent one day at the beach... maybe less. Anyway, while I was playing and collecting seashells I found this... thing... laying in the sand. It was about two and a half inches square and about half an inch thick.



The edges were rounded (see attached pic that I drew) and it was crystal clear. There was no head, no neck, no limbs, no eyes, no mouth, and for lack of better words no butt. I asked my dad what it was, but he just said it was a jellyfish and not to touch it.

Well, at six I knew nothing about the paranormal, but I've been an animal lover since birth. Since I didn't know if it was dead or alive I picked it up with my red plastic shovel and threw it back into the ocean. Now I wish I'd kept it. I still have the shovel (believe it or not), that's how I was able to figure out the approximate size.

In the 14 odd years since then I have NEVER seen a jellyfish like that again, not even in a book. The only place I've seen ANYTHING close to it is in paranormal books. Pics of other strange masses that have washed ashore. Mine was just much smaller.

Do you have any ideas to what I saw?

Elizabeth Clem
Indiana

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Do they Owe us a Living?

Reality Asylum

Dear Jon,

Thanks for the recent issue of *Animals & Men*. I was particularly interested in Dr Pye's article on the possible origins of various BHMs in undiscovered relict populations of Miocene anthropoid apes.

Whilst not being a biologist, I cannot comment on all of his theories which nevertheless seem convincing to me. There are, however, some points which do deserve comment.

Firstly, the slow multiplication of species by a gradual bifurcation of existing groups has recently been challenged by some biologists. In an article in *The New Scientist* published last summer, it was suggested that specialisation occurs in rapid explosions after mass extinctions following a slow "darwinnowing" as individual species fail to adapt successfully to their environments.

Thus, recent trends in mainstream science would make the rapid extinction of all but a mere handful of these species extremely unlikely. Therefore, it becomes increasingly probable that more ape species have survived, thus supporting that part of Dr Pye's thesis.

However, while I agree with Dr Pye, that the brain-hand connection also seems increasingly unlikely as one of the causes of future hominid evolution, and proliferation, he has not proven how such a puny and ill adapted creature could ever have moved out of the African forests, surviving the hazards and privations to become the planet's dominant and most ecologically dangerous animal. Perhaps he would consider this as the subject of his next article.

Finally, it almost seems redundant to comment on the sad death of Dr Heuvelmans without whom cryptozoology as a discipline would not exist. One can only hope that future generations will take up his challenge and go *sur la piste de betes ignorees*. Take care, and good hunting for the year ahead.

Yours

Dave Sivier,
Bristol.

Dear Ed,

Re. Gary Cunningham's article in the 2002 Yearbook.

I trust that the following will further muddy the waters (phonetics in brackets following the Gaelic). Both languages (Scot's Gaelic and Irish Gaelic) have a common root and are often interchangeable, not so the otter.

Scot's Gaelic for otter is *Madadl-donn* (Madoo Donn) meaning "Brown Dog" as *Madadl-ruaal* (M. rooal) is the fox - "Red Dog". *Cu* also means dog as in *Cu-uisge* (Coo-oosile), "Newfoundland Water Dog".

The Irish *Dobhar-Chu* (Dovar-coo) is exactly the same in Scots. Except it's a beaver not an otter. As we are discussing two different animals any theoretical conjecture is meaningless.

References from 1703 (Martin) - a non Gaelic speaker - refer to a *Tarbh-uisge* - a "water bull", yet a third candidate and even more problematical than the others.

Other contenders are the *luga* - "big worm", *smogaitheach* - a large pawed squat beast, the *Beithin*, a very large serpent, the *Seich Mhor* - large water monster or the *maclamhaich* - sea devil.

As the Gaels have a word for everything from mermaid (*maighdeann-mhara*) to unicorn (*buabhall*) I doubt whether they would confuse the nomenclature of otters and beavers.

Even if somebody else did.

Halfway through the yearbook - all good stuff.
From the correspondent formerly known as:
Tuath de dha an erioch (North of the Border)
Aka

Tom Anderson,
Aberdeen.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Bloody hell!

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Shaved Women

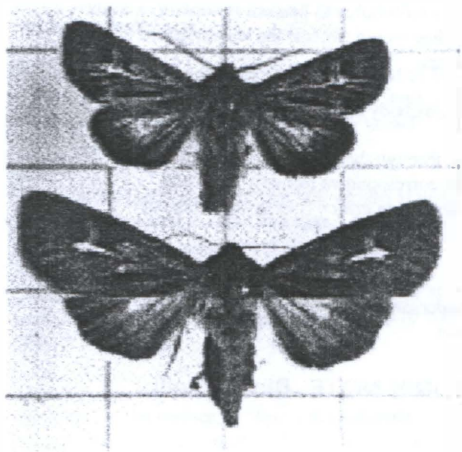
Dear Jon,

An airship and a swarm of caterpillars

In the autumn of 1917 a very strange Fortean event occurred in the Jenkin Chapel area of Saltersford in the moors above Macclesfield, Cheshire. Doug Pickford recorded the whole incident in his book 'In and around the Peak District' published in 1993. I wrote to Mr Pickford in January 2002 to try and find out more about the incident but I received no reply. This account therefore owes a lot to the research efforts of Mr Pickford.

One moonlit night in 1917 the only German Zeppelin known to have flown over the Saltersford area during the war passed overhead. The aircraft dropped a bomb at Pott Shrigley which did not explode. It was shot down later over the coast. That night and the following morning local residents found millions of caterpillars on the ground.

These caterpillars were black and yellow coloured and one and a half inches in length. I spoke to David Carter of the Natural History Museum in London and he suggested that the caterpillars could be from either the cinnabar moth or the antlar moth. Shane Farrell, the Moth Officer of the Cheshire and Peak District branch of Butterfly Conservation agreed.



The antlar moth's caterpillars are particularly numerous on occasions, with appearances on grass in their thousands. I have found no pre World War One incidents of early U.F.O.s dropping insects. From late July to early September 1909, "airships" were observed by hundreds of people over the North and South islands of New Zealand.

This is long before the modern wave of U.F.O. sightings began in 1947 with Kenneth Arnolds observations in the U.S.A.

The Fortean literature is quite rich in recordings of sudden appearances of swarms of insects. In Fort's book 'Lo!' the appearance of enormous numbers of long black flies at Havre, France is mentioned. This happened on August 18th 1880.

The Jenkin Chapel caterpillars ate everything. There was no hay left to be harvested and no food left for the cattle. Where crops and grass should have been, the area was black. The caterpillars even got inside farmers houses. Crows in their thousands came to feast off the caterpillars.

Was this whole incident an early example of biological warfare or an aberration of nature? We may never know.

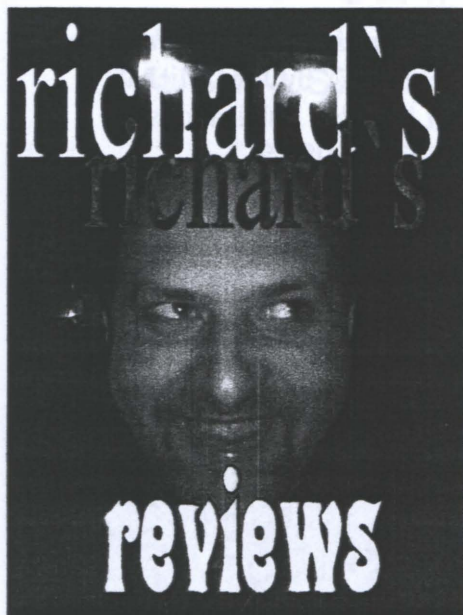
Richard Muirhead
Macclesfield

EDITOR'S NOTE: The fact that "Crows in their hundreds" came to eat the caterpillars suggests that whatever they were they were *not* the larva of the cinnabar moth, which is highly distasteful to birds.

It is also, perhaps, worth noting that in *The Book of the Damned* Charles Fort noted another fall of black larvae, in the Devon village of Bramford Speke – only a few miles away from the CFZ offices in Exeter.

These occurred in the middle of winter which would be even more unusual in many ways than the incident described by Richard because they fell during a time when the ground was covered with snow and ice – an inhospitable environment for any soft bodied insect larva.

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Mothman and Other Curious Encounters, by Loren Coleman,
Paraview Press

ISBN: 1-931044-34-1

Loren's *Mysterious America* is surely one of the most inspirational fortune books ever written. It was recently reprinted by Paraview (and reviewed herein). It was basically the same book with a few updates.

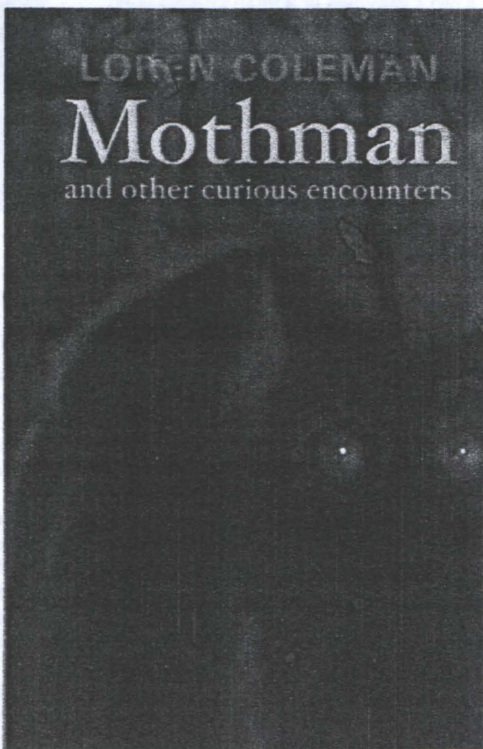
Rumour had it that his other great book *Curious Encounters* was also up for a reprint. This book, however is anything but a reprint. Using mostly new material Coleman casts his eye over some of his country's most disturbing moments. Lizardmen, the Flatwoods monster, thunderbirds, they all get their turn. But it is the terrifying entity that haunted Point Pleasant, West Virginia, for 13 months in 1966/1967 that steals the show.

Flaps happen all over the world but this one is still to be bested for downright weirdness and the air of brooding fear it still elicits 35 years on.

Apart from John Keel's *The Mothman Prophecies* this is the best book ever written on the faceless winged horror. Like Keel Colman cannot write a dull sentence (to paraphrase Colin Wilson).

As one reads the book one cannot help feeling some kind of inhuman reasoning, some alien (but not extraterrestrial) purpose to the chain of events. On reading *Mothman and Other Curious Encounters*, every night shadow takes on a new and more animate appearance.

The reader is also left with the uneasy feeling that if, for a year, the unremarkable little town of Point Pleasant, could be the focus of such a visitation, when and where will the next flap occur?



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Film: *The Mothman Prophecies*,
Dir: Mark Pellington,
Wr: Richard Hatem
Starring Richard Gere

What is it with film makers that leads them to believe that they can just take someone's work and change it for no good reason?

John Keel's gooseflesh first hand account is largely ignored or warped out of recognition by Hollywood's cookie cutter approach to film making.

The story is updated to the 1990s, John Keel is turned into John Klien, and an ultra-predictable sub plot is tacked on.

After Klien's wife dies of a moth shaped brain tumor (after seeing the creature), Klien finds himself inexplicably turning up in West Virginia. He falls for the sexy police chief who just happens to be investigating sightings of a red eyed flying monster.

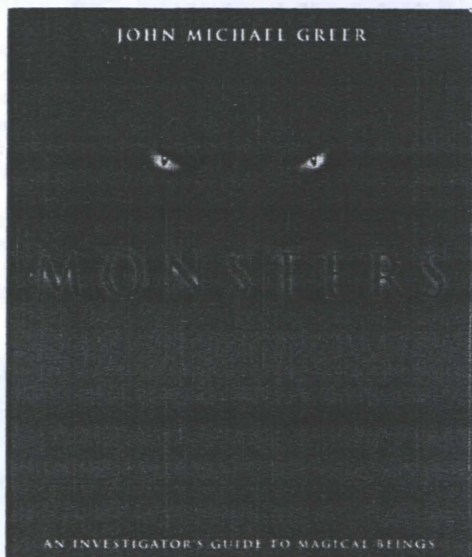
Pestered by Indrid Cold (one of the few characters who makes it from the book) who seems to know every detail about Klien, our hero becomes ever more paranoid and confused.

He consults paranormal investigator Alexander Leek (Keel backwards!) who warns him such creatures are portents of doom. The film ends with the collapse of the Silver Bridge and the disappearance of Mothman.

The film would have worked much better as a straight dramatisation of the book. So much is missing in the film, replaced by unimaginative pap. And Mothman himself? Blink and you will miss him!

I await Quentin Tarantino's adaptation of *The Dragon and the Disk* with anticipation.

Monsters: an investigators guide to magical beings, by John Michael Greer, Llewellyn Publications, ISBN0-7387-0050-9



John Michael Greer is a noted magician and an initiated druid of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids. He is a noted author with several books on magick to his name. This book is an excellent example for the fortune of an outsider, someone with a different world view to most of the readers, and his take on the reality of monsters. The fortune and the occultist have much in common. Greer accepts the reality of flesh and blood cryptozoology but the book deals mainly with magickal (or paranormal creatures) and how to deal with them.

Greer believes that these monsters have their genesis in the varying levels of being that include physical, etheric, astral, mental, and spiritual. This strongly resembles John Keel's super-spectrum or Ted Holliday's goblin universe. As both a fortune and an occultist this makes perfect sense to me but may come as a surprise to others.

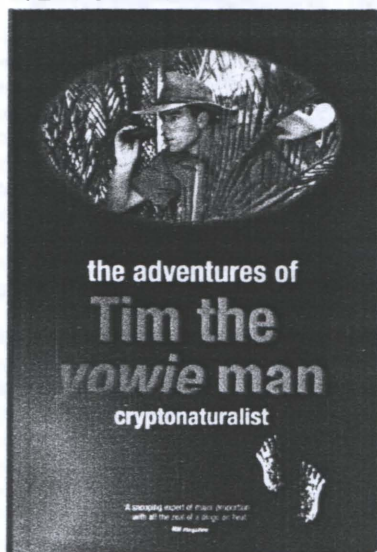
In this likably written book Greer covers vampires, werewolves, dragons, fairies, deamons, spirits and a host of others.

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Of particular interest is the case of SUNDS (sudden nocturnal death syndrome). This was a phenomena that began in the USA in 1977. Ordinary, healthy people died in their sleep for no apparent reason. All were members of a Laos hill tribe called the Hmong who had emigrated at the end of the Vietnam war. It was found that the Hmong believed in a vampire like ghost called the *dab tsog* (pronounced da cho). These were amorphous ancestral spirits that had to be placated by ritual and sacrifice. Failure to observe these rites meant that the *dab tsog* would prey on the living, sucking the life out of them. As the hill tribes were fragmented the rites were lost and it seemed that the hungry *dab tsog* followed the Hmong around the world for revenge. SUNDS stopped when the ex-pat Hmong began their ancient rituals again

He also gives practical advice on first hand investigation of monsters and magickal protection from them. He rounds off his book with a truly huge bibliography that contains many obscure and little known books. All in all an excellent tome.

The Adventures of Tim the Yowie Man Cryptonaturalist, by Tim Bull, Random House Australia
ISBN 1 7405078 X



There's something about Aussie cryptozoologists, they are all so damn likeable. Tony Healy stayed at the CFZ a couple of years ago and he was a great bloke. Likewise, Peter Chapple came all the way from London to Exeter to give us a lecture on the Tazzie wolf. Last year Tim Bull aka Tim the Yowie Man paid us a visit on his tour of Pommy land. He came up to Newcastle with us to see the stamping ground (or splashing ground) of the Shoney, the great Geordie sea serpent. Well, Tim's adventures and misadventures are now chronicled in this book.

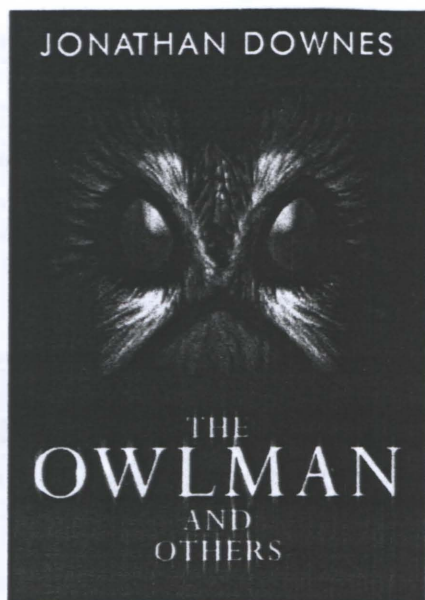
Tim, who saw an antipodean ape in Australia's Snowy Mountains has pursued monsters all around the world. But he is not afraid to tell us about his mistakes. Some of the funniest pages in the annals of cryptozoology are included in Tim's writings. These include being hoaxed by a greyhound painted with stripes to resemble a thylacine, being kidnapped by a gang of Swiss men dressed as yetis, being savaged by a monkey on the rock of Gibraltar, and getting suppurating sores from swimming in water by a swage outlet in search of a sea serpent!

Tim investigates well known monsters like the yowie, bigfoot, Nessie, and sea serpents but also some unique one such as the Hawaiian lava tube pig monster (just read the book, it's easier).

After his adventures on his recent visit to the UK (some of which are chronicled elsewhere in this issue), and which included a mighty drinking session with the CFZ at the Twilight Worlds Halloween bash in South Shields last November it is tempting to theorise that we may appear lampooned in Tim's next book. If so, we will be in august company.

As well as monster Tim investigates earth lights, UFOs, ghosts, and ancient archaeology. Hence he calls himself a *cryptonaturalist*. Tim should really be seen as an international hero due to his disruption of the Survivor II series. These "real life" tv shows are the nadir of television and indicative of the laziness of producers and the zombie like stupidity of the viewing public. Tim found out about the secret location and the Crew's high handedness with locals. He bombarded the participants food parcels and revealed the location on the wireless and on his website. Good on ya Tim!

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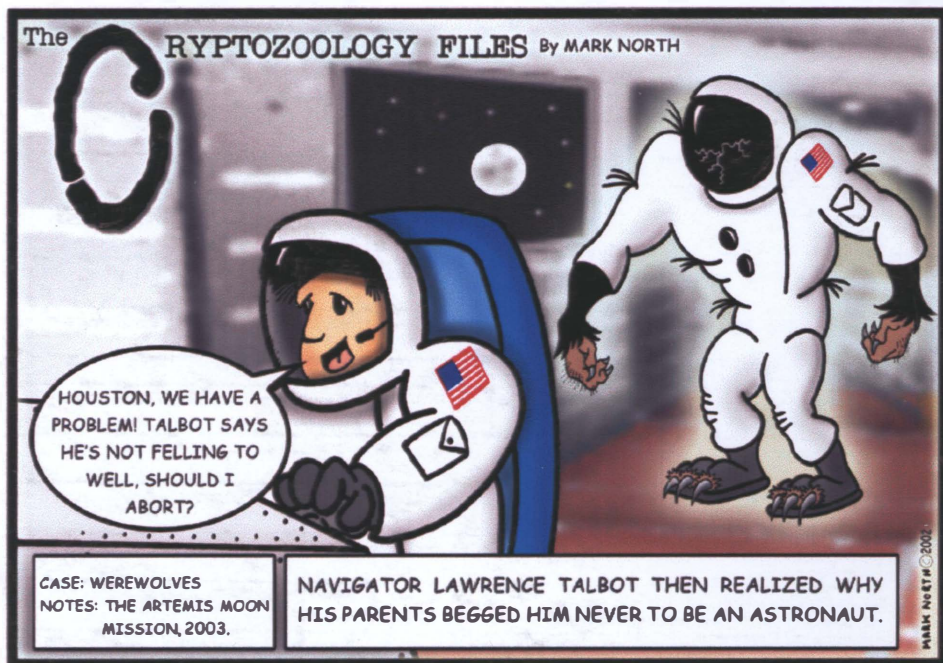
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ISSN 1354 0647

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Typeset by someone running with scissors

"...oh how we danced on the night we were wed"